



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

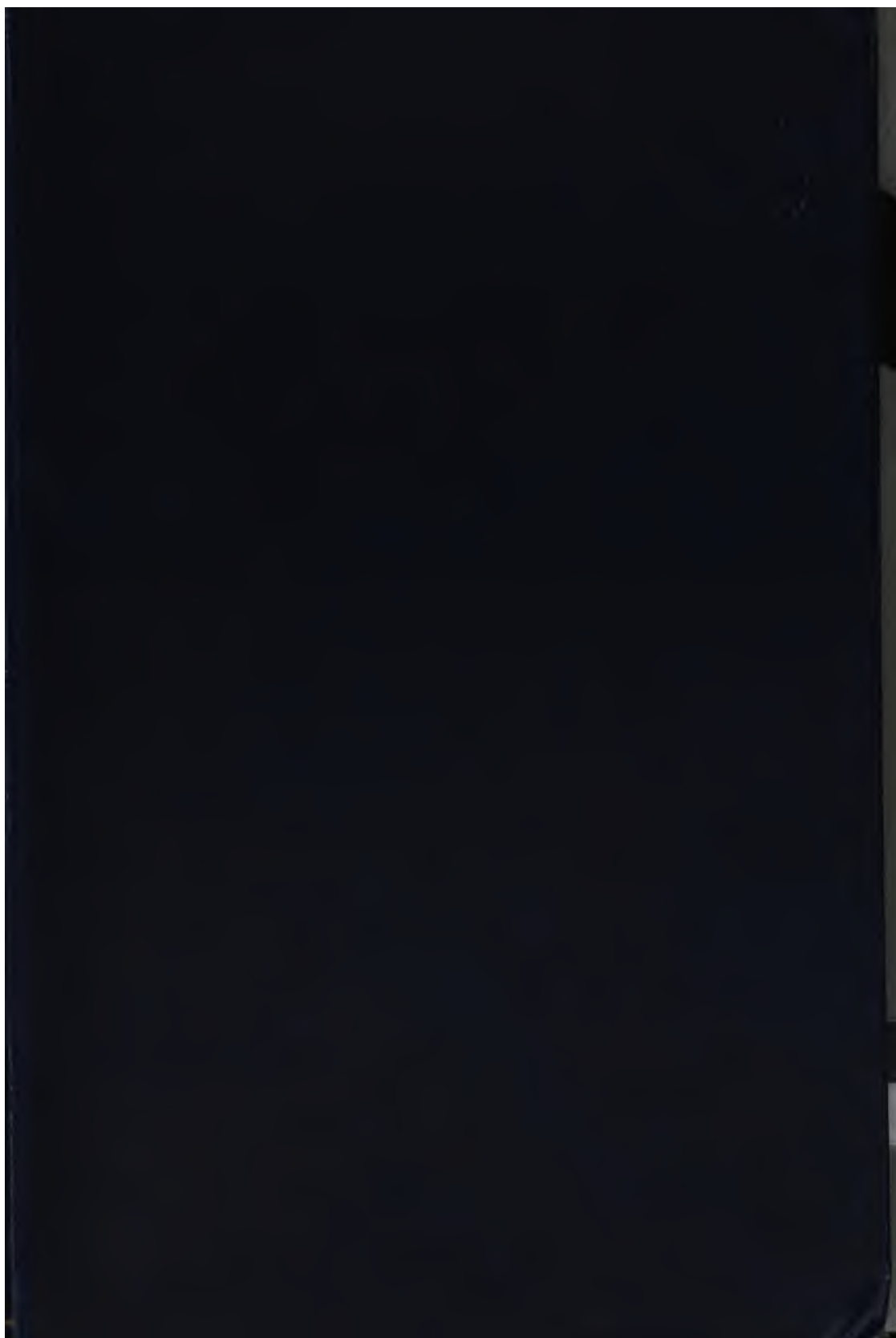
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



gift of

Ida Wehner



STANFORD UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES



LITERARY STUDIES

OF

POEMS, NEW AND OLD

BY

DOROTHEA BEALE, LL.D. ED.

PRINCIPAL OF THE CHELTENHAM LADIES' COLLEGE

CORRESPONDING MEMBER OF THE NAT. ED. ASSOC., U.S.A.

OFFICIER D'ACADÉMIE, PARIS

LONDON

GEORGE BELL AND SON

YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN

1902

PR 99
B3

PREFACE.

THE following is chiefly a selection from papers written for English literature classes at the Ladies' College, Cheltenham. Others are reprints from various periodicals. The first two were written for meetings of our Guild of old pupils, at which were given respectively scenes from Dante, and from Spenser's *Faëry Queene*.

I have thought it best to leave them in their original form.

The allusions in the Britomart paper are to stained glass windows representing six episodes in the story. (1) Britomart is looking into the magic mirror. (2) She is clothing herself in armour in the Church. (3) She is defending the Red-cross Knight. (4) She is passing through the fire. (5) She meets Sir Arthegall. (6) She sends him out to accomplish his work.

LADIES' COLLEGE, CHELTENHAM,
September, 1902.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
DANTE AND BEATRICE	I
BRITOMART, OR SPENSER'S IDEAL OF WOMAN	25
KING LEAR; RELATION OF PARENT AND CHILD	52
THEOLOGY OF PARADISE LOST; IMAGINARY CONVERSATIONS. .	75
RELIGIOUS TEACHING OF BROWNING	83
BROWNING'S CHRISTMAS EVE	108
NEW WINE	130
THE CONNECTION OF LITERATURE WITH HISTORY. . . .	144
A VISION OF MANY DIMENSIONS	156

Dante and Beatrice.

THIS is the fifth time that some members of our Guild have dramatised for us a great poem, and thereby helped to make the ideal of the poet more real, and more influential.

In Tennyson's *Princess* we sought to bring before you the woman full of noble aspirations, who learns that only in the communion of labour, through men and women seeking together the highest good, can the world be purified; each must bring to the commonwealth his own special gifts, and the ideal must be wrought out in the actual.

In *Britomart* we beheld the ideal woman of mediæval poetry, strong and brave, a helpmeet for the ideal Knight, ready to do her part in the crusade against wrong, and victorious over evil through the power of inward purity.

In *Comus* we saw the lady in less martial guise, saved by heavenly grace from the snares of the world, the flesh and the devil.

Last time we turned to the great epic allegory of Greece, and brought before our audience Homeric ideals in Penelope, Nausicaa and Andromache.

This is the six hundredth anniversary of the year to which Dante assigns his vision, and we propose to present in dramatic form some of the teachings of his great poem. It is a more difficult task than any we have yet attempted.

No poem perhaps forms so good an introduction

to the teaching of the seers and poets of all ages ; it translates into mediæval language the classical imagery, and spiritualises for modern thought the world of sense.

"The poetry of Dante," writes Shelley, "may be considered as a bridge, thrown over the stream of time, which unites the modern and the ancient world. Homer was the first, and Dante the second epic poet. Dante was the first awakener of entranced Europe ; he created a language in itself musical and persuasive, out of a chaos of in-harmonious barbarisms. He was the congregator of those great spirits who presided over the resurrection of learning ; the Lucifer of that starry flock, which in the thirteenth century shone forth from republican Italy as from a heaven, into the darkness of the benighted world."

Coleridge has drawn the contrast between the Greek and Christian ideals, with which Browning in "Old Pictures in Florence" has made us familiar.

"Dante is the living link between religion and philosophy. He philosophised the religion and christianised the philosophy of Italy. The Greeks changed ideas into finites, and these finites into anthropomorphs. Their religion, their poetry, their very pictures, became statuesque. With them the form was the end. The reverse of this is found in Christianity ; finites, even the human form, must be brought into connection with, and be symbolical of, the infinite, and hence arose a combination of poetry (1) with doctrine and (2) with sentiment."

No one can be considered really educated in the literature of the world who has not in some degree made a study of Dante, and yet there is in it much that is only for an age, not for all time, and to follow up the many bye-paths would divert us from the main current of the teaching. We introduce but little which has to do with the historical Dante, but we behold in vision "the passage of the blessed soul from the slavery of this present corruption to the liberty of eternal glory". We earnestly hope that the teaching of this wonderful poem may help our members in their earthly pilgrim-

age, and that they may be enabled in some measure to see in the visible universe, the scroll, that is written within and without, the picture writing, the sacred hieroglyphics which reveal the unseen.

Much of the scenery of the poem is incapable of representation, except in the chambers of imagery in which the soul dwells alone, for even pictures, much more dramatic representations, tend to materialise the spiritual ; but there is a region in which the religious consciousness loves to dwell, a universe, in which pure form takes actual shape ; into this region we are led by the artist and the poet ; it is to this region that the master of Greek tragedy introduced us in the Prometheus, and Wagner has to-day shown that poetry, music, and dramatic action, help to make more real and present and energetic the convictions of our souls.

When the symbolism is too awful to represent to eye or ear, we pause, and leave it to the heart to conceive the things which God revealed to this great prophet during the years of his wanderings in the desert—this Moses sent to bring the people of God from the bondage of the letter into the liberty of the spirit.

The poem has exercised a strange fascination for great thinkers and writers of the most opposite opinions, and many have been the translations and commentaries published in recent times ; the interest is increasing rather than diminishing.

I begin with a few quotations from the eloquent essay of Dean Church :—

“ The Divina Commedia is one of the landmarks of history. More than a magnificent poem, more than the beginning of a language and the opening of a national literature, more than the inspirer of art, and the glory of a great people, it is one of those rare and solemn monuments of the mind's power. It stands with the Iliad and Shakespeare's plays, with the writings of Aristotle and Plato, with the Novum

Organum and the Principia, with Justinian's Code, with the Parthenon and St. Peter's. It is the first Christian Poem; and it opens European Literature, as the Iliad did that of Greece and Rome."

"The greatness of his work is not in its details. It is the greatness of a comprehensive and vast conception, sustaining without failure the trial of its long and hazardous execution, and fulfilling at its close the hope and promise of its beginning. Many a surprise, many a difficulty, many a disappointment, many a strange reverse and alternation of feelings, attend the progress of the most patient and admiring reader of the *Commedia*,—as many as attend on one who follows the unfolding of a strong character in life. We are often shocked when we are prepared to admire—repelled when we came with sympathy; depths are revealed which we cannot sound, mysteries which baffle and confound us."

"Those who know the *Divina Commedia* best, will best know how hard it is to be the interpreter of such a mind as Dante's, but they know and would wish others also to know, not by hearsay, but by experience, the power of his wonderful poem. They know its austere, yet subduing beauty; they know what force there is in its earnest and solemn verse to strengthen, to tranquillise, to console . . . they know how often its seriousness has put to shame their trifling, its magnanimity their faintheartedness, its living energy their indolence, its stern and sad grandeur rebuked low thoughts, its thrilling tenderness overcome sullenness and assuaged distress, its strong faith quelled despair and soothed perplexity, its vast grasp imparted the sense of harmony to the view of clashing truths. They know how often they have found in times of trouble, if not light, at least that deep sense of reality, permanent though unseen, which is more than light can always give—in the view which it has suggested to them of the judgments and the love of God."

"The primary purpose is to stamp a deep impression on the mind of the issues of good and evil doing here—of the real worlds of pain and joy. To do this forcibly, it is done in detail, of course it can only be done in figure. Punishment, purification, or the fulness of consolation are, as he would think, at this very moment, the lot of all the numberless spirits who have ever lived here—spirits still living and sentient as himself; without pause or interval, in all its parts simultaneously, this awful scene is going on. The judgments of God are being fulfilled, could we see it. It exists, as might be seen, at each instant of time, by a soul whose eyes were opened. And this he imagines. It had been imagined before; it is the working out which is peculiar to Dante. It is not a barren vision. His

subject is besides the eternal world, the soul which contemplates it ; by sight, according to his figures—in reality, by faith. As he is led on from woe to deeper woe, then through the tempered chastisements and resignation of Purgatory to the beatific vision, he is tracing the course of the soul on the earth, in realising sin and weaning itself from it, telling of its purification and preparation for its high lot, by converse with the good and wise, by the remedies of grace, by efforts of will and love, perhaps by the dominant guidance of some single pure and holy influence, whether of person, or institution, or thought. Nor will we say that beyond this earthly probation, he is not also striving to grasp and imagine to himself something of that awful process and training by which, whether in or out of the flesh, the spirit is made fit to meet its Maker, its Judge, and its Chief Good."

"It is an epos of the soul, placed for its trial in a fearful and wonderful world, with relations to time and matter, history and nature, good and evil, the beautiful, the intelligible, and the mysterious, sin and grace, the infinite and the eternal—and having in the company and under the influences of other intelligences, to make its choice, to struggle, to succeed or fail, to gain the light or be lost—this was a new and unattempted theme."

It is not then as the revelation of a future state that we shall treat the poem, this is doubtless embraced in it ; it is the objective presentation of the subjective consciousness.

"The poem is a diary of a human soul in its journey upwards from error, through repentance to atonement with God."¹

As the vibrations of ether which move the organs of sense need to be translated by the understanding, ere we see ocean and land and sky, and the manifold of this visible, intelligible universe—so does the Reason, the spiritual consciousness, find in the things of earth the patterns of things in the heavens, and the eternal realities can be expressed for us only in the language of poetry and symbol of parable and metaphor. Not only in what are commonly called poems, but in the language of common life, we find what have been

¹ Lowell.

called fossil poems. We talk of deep sorrow, lofty ambition, broad-mindedness, longsuffering, outer darkness, for though a spirit cannot be thought of as having dimensions, we who live in the cave can know the realities beyond and above only through the shadows that we see.

A little child and one who has never grown up may read this poem as a literal story, but to those who have spiritual discernment, there is ever as they read a double consciousness. Perhaps Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, which is I hope familiar to all, will best illustrate my meaning, though Milton's *Paradise Lost* has greater resemblance to Dante's poem. When Bunyan describes his "progress from this world to that which is to come," the scenery is that of Elstow, his actual home on earth. We have the village in the plain, the field leading to a bog which stands for the slough of Despond, the people are doubtless his neighbours, yet the progress described is that of his own soul, and all things are seen by him from the vantage ground of the eternal world. It does not occur to us to think whether Bunyan believed that any part of the story was literally true.

So too we read Dante's spiritual history in the *Vita Nuova*, the *Convito*, the *Commedia*. The familiar landscape of Italy, the terraced slopes of the Alps, are transfigured to form the scenery of that stage on which is enacted the spiritual drama; the people are those who once dwelt on earth, but for the theatre on which is enacted the soul's tragedy, we have that globe,

"That hollow space
That rounds the mortal temples of a man".¹

Dante's visions were larger, deeper, higher perhaps

¹ Richard II.

than that of any other poet who has traced the outlines of the soul's pilgrimage, his learning was more extensive even than Milton's, his imagination of higher range, and all who have made a deep study of the poems must I think in spiritual insight give the palm to Dante. But none of these poets designed to give us a literal description of the state of souls after death. Milton deliberately adopted for the purposes of his poem a cosmos in which, as the friend of Galileo, he had ceased to believe, and he forms, as we see specially in the figures of sin and death and in the Paradise of fools, spiritual beings out of a mythological imagination, just as did the old poets to whom Dante refers. He tells us in so many words, that hell is not to be thought of in terms of space.

"The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven."

Dante's design has some external similarity with Milton's poem, but it is intrinsically different. Milton is a religious dogmatist; he begins from the outside—Dante is a spiritual philosopher. Milton regards the world from without it, Dante like Spenser sees it only as mirrored in the soul—each has through the magic power of a magnificent poem conjured up for us a Universe in which the visible, the transitory, shadows forth the real, the eternal. All spiritual poems need for their understanding that we should become poets ourselves, that our eyes should be opened to see, that we should have ears to hear. It is specially true of this great poem that "the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life".

I desire in this brief introduction to give those who have little or no knowledge of the poem, some few notes to help them to understand the scope and inner

meaning of the poem, and to connect the different scenes which we have selected for representation ; it is too vast, too terrible, too magnificent to give as a whole.

A few words about the scenery. You must think of the Universe as men did when Dante lived. The earth is the centre, and surrounding it, and moving round its centre, are nine globes made of transparent crystal, in each of which are fixed planets and stars. The nearest of the crystal spheres carries the moon, then we have in order Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, the fixed stars, and one that remains still, but at its pole turns all the other spheres. This is called the *Primum Mobile*, and it is opaque ; but beyond is heaven, called the *Empyrean*, where the glory of God shines forth, and angels and glorified saints behold the *Beatific Vision*.

Dante pictures the earth as containing a deep pit in the shape of a sugar loaf, which reaches to the earth's centre ; this is called the *Inferno*. Here are seven terraces down which he descends, and sees those who are guilty of deadly sins being punished ; the worst sinners are in the lowest depths, and Satan at the very centre.

From the centre however there is a passage through which Dante reaches again the outside of the world, and comes at the antipodes to an island on which stands the mountain of *Purgatory* ; this is the same shape as the pit ; round it run seven terraces, up which the penitent souls climb to the *Earthly Paradise* at the summit.

One characteristic of the poem is what we may call the system of correspondences. This is fully explained in the *Convito*, and in the *Epistle to Can Grande*.

"Each thing has a within and without ; it is impossible to come to the within, if you do not first come to the without."

Dante illustrates this by the fable of Orpheus, in which is a truth concealed under a beautiful untruth, and also from Psalm cxiv., which means spiritually the soul's liberation from sin. This psalm should be thought of mystically throughout, especially the last verse. Dean Plumptre writes :—

"Dante's dedicatory epistle is as characteristic as Spenser's Epistle to Sir Walter Raleigh. . . . He adopts for his own 'sacred poem' the fourfold method of interpretation which applied to the sacred books of Scripture. And so the subject of the whole *Commedia* taken literally is the 'state of souls after death'. But allegorically it takes a wider range, and includes the whole moral government of God, and its subject is 'Man so far as by merit or demerit, in the exercise of the freedom of his will, he is under a system of rewards and punishments'. Those to whom it was given to know the inner mysteries of the poem would soon discover in Dante's language that it was 'polysemum,' a poem of manifold meanings. To take a few salient instances where there is something like a consensus, Beatrice is the daughter of Folco de Portinari ; she is also the symbol of a true philosophy. . . . Virgil is the poet on whose lines Dante had framed his own 'goodly style'. He is also the representative of human wisdom guiding perfectly within its limits, though unable to lead the pilgrim into the region of supernatural light. . . . Lucia is the Saint of Syracuse ; she is also the grace that illuminates man's natural reason. . . . Cato represents the highest form of merely human righteousness. . . . The four stars are the cardinal natural virtues of Plato's ethical language ; the three which make up the heptad are the Faith, Hope and Love of Christian ethics . . . and the three beasts which barred his ascent, whatever other meanings they may have, had, at all events, one which was moral, and represented sensuality, pride, and greed of gain, while they may point also to states and parties that were characterised by these vices."

Perhaps the chief characteristic of the poem is the absolute at-one-ment of the temporal and the eternal. There is no breach of continuity between the life before and after the death of the body—nor between time and eternity—we see the thoughts and acts are ever

forming the spiritual body. Again the saints in Heaven have not ceased to belong to earth, the holy influences which are ever proceeding from holy souls, from the indwelling grace, do not pass away, when the spirit passes out of sight.

The relation of the Beatrice of the Vita Nuova to the Beatrice of the Commedia is then of vital importance to the understanding of the complete trilogy, and for this reason we have introduced three scenes from the first. It seems to the lovers of the poet a real misfortune that the novelist Boccaccio, one incapable of ascending into the heavens, should have dragged the Beatrice of the Vita Nuova down to the earth, and materialised her as the daughter of Folco de' Portinari and the wife of a Florentine banker. To Boccaccio the things of time and sense are all. He cannot see beyond the trees of the earthly garden, in which he sought to shut out the solemn thoughts suggested by death.

Dante's method is the reverse of Boccaccio's. We have, as in the case of Virgil and perhaps Lucia, the earthly personality as the nucleus, and it may have been so in the case of Beatrice—but if Dante's Beatrice ever had an earthly form in the Vita Nuova, we see it gradually vanishing away, and in the Commedia the process is complete.

In his last edition Scartazzini shows how impossible it is to reconcile the Portinari legend with facts. He adds that the most earnest Dante scholars of Italy have abandoned the hypothesis.

I am sorry that Sir Theodore Martin takes for granted the truth of the tales of Boccaccio, and that he has deigned to notice the coarse suggestions of Leigh Hunt. I shall follow the advice of Virgil to Dante—*Non ragioniam di lor, ma guarda e passa.*

There are three ways of regarding the Vita Nuova. To the novelist and literalist it is a love story. The idealist recognises in the persons only forms of thought, empty of substantial reality,—abstractions, as virtue, love—forgetting that these can exist only in a person. The poet sees in the outward and visible the revelation to the inward eye of the spiritual, the real.

We would not deny that the meaning of the Vita Nuova, like that of the Exodus psalm, is "polysemum". Dante, we may believe, did see transfigured by the indwelling light a beautiful soul, which became for him a heavenly ideal; and in tropes and figures, and glowing colours, and music and song he clothed his ideal with grace and beauty; but we are sure that but little of his story is to be taken literally, and we would emphasise the spiritual, without which life here is a tale

"Told by an idiot—full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing".¹

A passage in the Convito, writes Mr. Symonds, helps us to understand how the image of Beatrice became identified in Dante's mind with that ideal of Divine Philosophy which ruled the minds of his masters, Boethius and Cicero. . . . And we learn to comprehend Dante's transition from the worship of Beatrice as a living woman to his worship of her as a symbol of Theology.

"As it happens that a man goes seeking silver, and, far from his design, finds gold, . . . not perchance without God's guidance, so I, who sought for consolation, found not only comfort for my tears, but also words of authors and of sciences and of books, weighing the which, I judged well that philosophy, the lady of these authors, was a thing supreme. And I imagined her in fashion like a gentle lady, nor could I fancy her otherwise than piteous; wherefore so truly did I gaze upon her with adoring eyes, that scarcely could I turn myself away."²

¹ Macbeth.

² Convito.

The more we study the trilogy the more it becomes apparent that we have therein the story of Dante's inner life, of the vision of Divine Philosophy as gradually revealed to his soul. His use of numbers in a mystical sense is doubtless intended to draw the mind from the literal to the spiritual, and the digression regarding the use of the vulgar tongue in the *Convito* would point out that the language of earth must be used, but the spiritual understanding will need to translate it into the language of heaven. The recurrence of the sacred number nine in all that relates to Beatrice is significant. The root of nine is three and the Trinity is three—"so Beatrice is a Nine, that is, a miracle whereof the root is nought but the marvellous Trinity".

Dante sees her first in her ninth year, when he himself is nine. She is clothed in crimson or flame colour, the accepted emblem of the spirit. Childlike in spirit, she is surrounded by children, whom we have represented, as Dante represents Matilda, gathering flowers and rejoicing in the works of God's hands. Beatrice does not speak, but she awakens in the poet the spiritual emotions associated with "trailing clouds of glory," the colours of the dawn, which will later "fade into the light of common day".

Nine years later he sees her once more. She is clothed in white, and supported by two older ladies, doubtless Faith and Reason; the emotional religion of childhood, which chiefly stirs the affections, is succeeded by the passion for the white light of truth, and now we have discourse of Reason.

Afterwards, there comes to him the fear of death for himself, but the Lord of Love brings to him once more, in a vision of the night, his lady clothed again in the crimson garment; to her Love offers the flaming

heart of the poet ; later he learns in the dream of her death that this world is no permanent home for the lady of his choice—she must be translated to a higher sphere.

VITA NUOVA.—SCENE I.

This describes the first meeting :—

“She appeared to me about the beginning of her ninth year, and I beheld her about the close of my own ninth year. Her apparel was crimson, and she wore a cincture and ornaments befitting her childish years. At that moment the spirit of life which abides in the heart began to tremble, and tremulously it spoke these words, Behold a God stronger than I who cometh to lord it over me. . . . From that time forth I say that Love held sovereign empire over my soul, which had upon the instant been betrothed unto him, and albeit her image, which was evermore present with me, might be love's mere imperiousness to keep me in his thrall, yet was its influence of such noble sort, that at no time did it suffer me to be ruled by love, save with the faithful sanction of reason in all those matters wherein it is of importance to listen to her counsel.”

We have here the awakening in the child Dante of the spiritual consciousness by which the soul passes out of the limitations of the self, and enters the larger life of love—sees, by means of the spiritual insight born of sympathy, the soul of another transfigured by a heavenly glory. Dante tells us with what reverent worship he cherished the ideal of Beauty and Goodness revealed to him in Beatrice. Has it not been so with us? We have felt the beauty of some lovely soul, we have revered and in the old sense of the word worshipped ; the ideal, not the actual person, was the object of our worship, the divine revealed in that soul—it was one whom we saw perhaps only from afar ; thus it was with Dante, his was a love spiritual and unearthly.

SCENE II.

It was not, he tells us, until nine years later that he saw her once more.

"As that excellent lady passed along the street, people ran to get a sight of her, and when she drew near to any one a feeling of reverence came over his heart, so that he had no courage to raise his eyes, or return her salute. But she, crowned and clothed with humility, pursued her way. Many exclaimed, This is not a woman, but one of the fairest of God's angels."

"That wondrous being appeared to me arrayed in the purest white, between two noble ladies older than herself, and as she passed along she turned her eyes towards the spot where I, thrilled through and through with awe, was standing; she saluted me in such gracious wise, that I seemed to see beatitude in all its length and breadth. The hour of her salutation was the ninth of that day; and this was the first time that words of hers had reached mine ears."

SCENE III.

We read of Beatrice's death only in a prophetic vision :—

"On the ninth day of my sickness, the thought of my lady stole into my mind. I said, It must needs be that Beatrice shall die. I closed my eyes and began to see strange visions. . . . Methought I saw the sun darkened so that the stars were visible; the birds as they flew fell dead. I fancied a friend came to me and said, Thy most excellent lady hath quitted this mortal sphere. Then I looked up to heaven, and it seemed as though I beheld a multitude of angels winging their way upward, and before them they bore a cloud of exceeding whiteness."

Beatrice then transcends the merely personal and becomes a "power". She is represented figuratively as still his teacher, not directly, but indirectly.

The thoughts indicated should be followed out in the *Convito*, which forms a connecting link between the *Vita Nuova* and *Commedia*. In it Dante gives a mystical explanation of his songs in honour of Beatrice, contained in the *Vita Nuova*, and tells us he intends to demonstrate the true meaning of these poems which is concealed under the veil of allegory. He writes :—

"In that first book . . . at the entrance into my youth I spoke; and in this latter I speak after my youth has already passed away.

And since my true meaning may be other than that which the aforesaid songs show forth, I mean by an allegoric exposition to explain these after the literal argument shall have been reasoned out : so that the one argument with the other shall give a relish to those who are the guests invited to this Banquet."

In the concluding words of the Vita Nuova he speaks of "a wondrous vision," which is not however related, and looks forward to a time "when he should be able to write more worthily of the dear saint, and to say of her what hath never yet been said of any".

I cannot here discuss the Vita Nuova as a whole. I have learnt much from an article in *The Quarterly* for July, 1896. It is the less necessary, as Mr. Murray and the author have kindly permitted me to reprint in the autumn number of our magazine this most suggestive paper. I especially commend also to my readers Symonds' Introduction to Dante, chapter ii., and Mrs. Russell Gurney's "Notes by the Way" should be read and re-read.

During the years which followed the death of Beatrice, and the taking form of the Commedia, Dante was learning in the school of suffering. He was banished from Florence, and sentence was pronounced, that if he returned he should be burned alive. So he passed out to wander as a stranger and a pilgrim on earth, to seek the "City which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God".

COMMEDIA.—ACT I.

His troubled thoughts shape themselves into familiar poetic imagery. We have the time-honoured symbolism of the trees of the forest. Perplexed, he is lost in the mazes of doubt, tempted by the lynx of low desires, threatened by the lion of fierce passions, hindered by the wolf of worldly greed. He hopes to

escape by his unaided efforts from his perplexities, but courage and strength fail him; then there comes to him the representative teacher of the nation selected, as Dante believed, to rule the world,¹ the poet teacher who was considered to be inspired, able to reveal, as in *Æneid* VI., the secrets of Hades, and to prophesy,² though he saw him not, the coming of the Messiah. The *Æneid* had been the first teacher of Dante, and so Virgil is personified as his guide. Like *Æneas*, Dante had been tossed about upon troubled seas, and found that only by passing through the darkness could he attain to light, get answers to the questions which perplexed him, and win confidence and hope. He must descend into depths where

"Silent is the sun,"

he must know the horror of that darkness which may be felt.

"Dante's journey begins under the Easter moon of the year of Jubilee, on the evening of Good Friday; the days of mourning he spends in the regions of woe, where none dares to pronounce the name of the Redeemer, and he issues forth to 'behold again the stars,' to learn how to die to sin and rise to righteousness, very early in the morning as it begins to dawn, on the day of the Resurrection. . . ."³

At the gate of the *Inferno* many a reader has

¹ See *De Monarchia*.

² "Iam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna;
Iam nova progenies caelo demititur alto.

.
Aggredere o magnos, aderit iam tempus, honores,
Cara deum suboles, magnum Jovis incrementum!
Aspice convexo nutantem pondere mundum,
Terrasque tractusque maris caelumque profundum,
Aspice, venturo laetantur ut omnia saeclo!"

Eclogue IV.

³ Dean Church. Compare Gardner's *Primer*, p. 101.

turned back, terrified by the inscription on the portal, and the cries of the lost. Dante represents himself as turning away, and only brought to look these things in the face, when reproached for cowardice. Surely we all know the impulse to escape from unwelcome truths, especially those which appeal to our own experience?

As in Michael Angelo's Last Judgment, so in the picture writing of the Inferno, the poet represents *sub specie eternitatis* the state of each soul, whether in the body or out of the body, which enters that outer darkness, where it no longer sees the light of love, and therefore abandons all hope, for evil is its own inevitable punishment.

Sin brings forth death, that death which is the loss of the true life, and that suffering which consists in eating the fruit of our own doings, and being filled with our own devices. All this is set forth in hieroglyphic writing, and may be realised here on earth. Hell is founded not merely by justice and power but by wisdom and love, for only through the feeling of the misery of sin is there possibility of deliverance, and it is from the very depths of Hell that the way of escape is found, and the conversion of the soul, the passing from the darkness of the Inferno, where hope is not, to the dawn of the purgatorial plain.

So Dante objectifies the sufferings of that soul, whether in the body or out of the body, that chooses evil; it must suffer; by its own evil will, it descends into that dark abyss, where it yields itself up to the tortures of evil passions. The souls that abandon their faith in supreme righteousness and love, enter Hell,—no ray of light can bring them the hope necessary for action. Those who have yielded themselves to the sway of the selfish passions forfeit that human distinction, freewill. We meet, therefore, first

those who as on earth are in ever restless, aimless pursuit of some vain object ; others, wrathful, passionate, *i.e.* tossed about by the raging tempest of anger.

Dr. Harris writes :—

“The great sculptor and painter, Michael Angelo, derived his ideas from the poet. The picture of the Last Judgment presents symbolically the condition of saints and sinners as they are in very truth. Every human being under the influence of any one of the deadly sins is being dragged down to the Inferno just as he has depicted. . . .

“If any one will study Dante carefully he will find that the punishments of the Inferno are emblematical of the very states of mind one experiences when under the influence of the passions there punished. To find the punishment for any given sin Dante looks at the state of mind which it causes in the sinner, and gives it its appropriate emblem. The angry and sullen are plunged underneath deep putrid mud, thus corresponding to the state of mind produced by anger. . . . The avaricious carry heavy weights. . . . Everlasting punishment is the true state of all who persist in the commission of those sins. The sins are indissolubly bound up in the pain. The . . . sinner—so far forth, and so long as he is a sinner—shall be tormented for ever, for we are now and always in eternity. ‘Every one of us,’ as Carlyle says, ‘is a ghost.’

“Thus . . . every deed is seen in its true light, in the entire compass of its effects . . . under the form of Eternity, all deeds do return to the doer ; and this is the final adjustment, ‘the end of all things’ : it is the Last Judgment. And this judgment is now and always the only Fact in the world.”

¹ “If we believe in the eternity of sin and evil, the eternity of suffering and punishment follows of necessity. To be able to acquiesce in the one but shrink from the other is sheer weakness. The eternity and hopelessness of Dante’s Hell are the necessary corollaries of the impenitence of his sinners.”

The sacred allegory in which all this is set forth is found as we study it more deeply to be marvellously full of teaching. Take for example the heretics who are represented as shut up in jars with the lid a little raised, which is to be shut down at the last ; these are

¹ Wicksteed.

they who have denied the immortality of the soul. Is this not indeed true, that those who see no eternal world are shut up imprisoned in this? As another poet has said, they "rivet down their own horizon"; their souls cannot pass out of the narrow limit of the suffering life of this little world, into the realms of love, the kingdom of Heaven. We may not think of the God of Love as vindictive—He "doth not willingly afflict the children of men," but those who live in the darkness must suffer. Dante asks whether any are delivered, and Virgil tells him he cannot answer.

ACT II.

In our first Act we leave Dante and his guide at the gate of Hell; we meet them again as they emerge into the plain of Purgatory; on this rises the terraced mountain, on the summit of which is the Earthly Paradise. The shock of Satan falling from Heaven on the side opposite to Jerusalem had hollowed out Hell, and the displaced earth at the antipodes of Jerusalem had formed the mountain up the seven terraces of which penitents have to climb, and to endure appropriate punishments, in order that they may be delivered from the seven deadly sins, and regain Paradise.

In verses of exquisite beauty the poet contrasts the darkness of Hell with the scenery, as they emerge from the gloom and reach the Island of Purgatory—there they see in the dawn the star of love, the four stars of the southern cross symbolising the four stern virtues of the ancient world. Cato the Stoic, the guardian of this region, represents the spirit of self-discipline; we have the meadow sprinkled with the dew of God's grace, needful to wash away the dark stains contracted as they passed through the Inferno; the poet must humbly stoop to receive cleansing, and must gird him

with the *umile pianta*. Here they meet souls who, in contrast to those in Hell, welcome suffering as a means of cleansing, and desire not to escape Divine justice, which is the means of their purification.

In the ante-purgatory Dante meets some he had known on earth. Casella teaches that the gifts which have been faithfully used on earth continue to bless in the after life, and Belacqua is a warning against indolent neglect. Here too we find Manfred, who, though he died excommunicate by the Pope, has found mercy from God; Jacopo, who had suffered on earth and desired now to purge his grave offences; Buonconte, "saved by one little tear"; Pia, the mystery of whose tragic fate is left to surmise; and others, who, having expiated their crimes on earth, desire to be thoroughly purged of their sin. At length they reach the gate.

For the interpretation of the concluding scenes I cannot do better than quote from Dean Plumptre:—

"It has seemed to me as I have read the Purgatorio, that in it, far more than in the Inferno or the Paradiso, the man Dante Alighieri reveals himself to us in all the distinctness of his personality; that the poem is essentially autobiographical. . . .

"The seer paints the process of the purification of his own soul from the seven deadly sins that had eaten into his life. We might almost speak of this section of his poem as the 'Confessions of Dante Alighieri'. . . . And so, when he had left the region 'where silent is the sun,' and can once more 'look upon the stars,' his spirit exults in its liberation. Nowhere in the whole poem, one might almost say in all poetry, is the brightness of that dawn, at once of the earthly and the heavenly morning, more beautifully painted. . . . But not the less in the midst of this natural joy is there the thought present to the poet's mind that he is entering on a solemn work; that it is he himself, his own soul, that needs the cleansing which he is about to describe.

"And when the pilgrim has at last arrived at the gates of Purgatory, the symbolism becomes yet richer and more suggestive. Dante had dreamt that he had been borne upward, as on an eagle's wings. He had been transported thither in that ecstasy of his morning slumber by Lucia, the symbol of heavenly illumination. . . . Sitting

on the topmost of three steps of varied hue, he sees the Angel of Purgatory with a face of transcendent brightness, he bears the 'sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God'.

"The first of the steps is of white marble, which mirrors all his features. There is the self-knowledge which sees itself in the mirror of the Divine Word. The second is of stone, nearly black, rough and coarse and cracked. There is the rough sternness of mortification, in all its contrast to the softness of the self-indulgence in which the natural man delights. The third is of fiery porphyry, crimson like blood. There is the glow of burning love, not without a latent hint of the supreme instance of that Love in the blood that flowed from hands and feet and wounded side upon the cross."

Dante prays for admission; he is himself among the penitents. The process of purification we cannot follow; Dante himself passes up the seven terraces, climbing with the penitents, beholding their sufferings willingly endured, learning with them from sculpture and music and song and story the evil consequences of sin, and the blessedness of the opposite grace; he too, climbs painfully, but with ever-increasing energy and joy, and as each sin is vanquished an angel's wing touches with healing efficacy the pilgrim's forehead, and the wound disappears.

ACT III.

At length the pilgrims pass through the purifying fire which separates them from the Earthly Paradise. On the way they have been joined by the poet Statius, said to have been led to Christ by reading the *Æneid*; he accompanies them to the summit. We have transposed the meeting.

"Very striking," writes Dean Plumptre, "is the thought of Dante in placing the Earthly Paradise on the summit of the Mount of Cleansing. The truth which he sought to embody in that outward form was (i.) that this was the natural close of all that Purgatory could accomplish; (ii.) that all the purifying processes of repentance

and discipline could not lead men beyond the point of perfection and of bliss, from which, as he viewed the history of the human race, man had started, and which he had, in the very day of his creation, forfeited. For those who were saved in Christ there was reserved some better thing—the communion of the soul with God, the beatific vision of the saints, attainable only through the Incarnation.”

For the symbolism of the Earthly Paradise I must again take Dean Plumptre as my guide:—

“In Matilda, well-nigh all interpreters have seen the representative of active, as distinct from contemplative, holiness. Her hands are full of flowers, and her eyes are bright with the brightness of a benign and sympathising love. That he may understand what he sees, she bids him remember Psalm xcii., of which he gives but the key-note word, but of which at least one whole verse must have been present to his thoughts—

‘Quia delectasti me, Domine, in factura Tua,
Et in Operibus manuum Tuarum exultabo’.

Here was the supreme sanction for man’s delight in the works of God, for the witness borne by all forms of visible beauty to that which is invisible and eternal.”

We next meet Leah and Rachel,¹ types of the unglorified, active and contemplative powers of man, as Matilda and Beatrice of the same powers glorified. Leah took delight in her own labour, she gathers flowers to decorate herself, but Matilda in *Operibus manuum Tuarum*. Rachel contemplates herself, and delights in her own image, Beatrice in the vision of God.

“Then there comes,” says Plumptre, “the final revelation of Beatrice, Madonna-like in her beauty, and arrayed in the symbolic colours,² the white, green and crimson, with which early Italian art clothed its ideal of that Madonna. . . . It is not till the soul has been cleansed from its last baseness, and conquered its last besetting sin, and passed through the agonising fire, that it learns to comprehend fully the root evil of which the seven deadly sins were but the manifold outgrowth.

¹ Ruskin’s *Modern Painters*, iii., 222.

² Faith, Hope, Love.

"Then at last it sees that there has been throughout an unfaithfulness to God. Disloyalty to her who had first wakened in him the sense of a higher life, of an eternal good, had been disloyalty to Him Who, through her, had sought to lead him to Himself. When that confession had been made, then, and not till then, the time has come for the baptism of a new regeneration, in what for him is as the passage of a new Jordan. The river which he thus crossed was none other than the stream of Lethe, which Dante with a profound insight, though in defiance of all Christian tradition, thus places as all but the final stage of purification. He had felt, as all souls that have passed through the crisis of conversion have felt, that what is needed for the soul is that its memory may be cleansed from all the evil of the past; that as God 'blots out as a thick cloud its transgressions, and as a cloud its sins,' so it too may forget the past, or remember it only as belonging to an alien and a vanished self. . . . Well may Beatrice tell him that his Lethe draught has been free and full, and feel that the time has come for it to be followed by that from the other mystic river—absolutely the pure creation of the poet's mind, which revives the memory of every good deed done, and so completing the transformation wrought out by Lethe, gives to the new man the true self, the continuity of life which had seemed before to belong to the old, the false, the evil, self."

Has any other poet imagined a nature so pure and lofty as that of Beatrice? Never is there a touch of that baseness which is the essence of all sin, the desire to attain some selfish end; her love sought not to please but to perfect. She "prints her footstep in Hell" that she may bring Dante out of it, she brings him through the purifying fire, and when the joyful moment of meeting in Paradise arrives, she forces him to endure that final agony of seeing his past life as the angels of God see it, as the enlightened conscience sees it, with all its unrealised possibilities and its wasted opportunities, to see himself as he is, and as he might have been—to "look on this picture and on that". It is not in the first instance to Dante but to the angels that Beatrice addresses her reproaches. At the Gate of Purgatory and on entering Paradise he had seen

himself mirrored in the polished marble and in the clear stream—now he is to have a vision of himself as seen by the heavenly intelligences.

At last Beatrice turns to him and draws from him his confession. It is not till he has passed through this last fire, and stands without excuse, self-convicted, that he is allowed to drink of the waters of Lethe—to forget the sins of which he has repented; and then of Eunœ—to remember all the blessings of the earthly life; then Divine Wisdom unveils her second, her spiritual beauty, so that he is able to behold her face, and we leave her gazing upward and the poet standing in the sunshine.

From the Paradiso we give only the concluding picture; when the poet is about to return once more to earth, he sees her from afar, and she

“Smiled as it seemed, and looked once more at me,
Then unto the eternal fountain turned”.

Let me, in conclusion, quote the words of a prophet to whom a like vision was granted:—

“I prayed, and understanding was given me; I called upon God, and the Spirit of Wisdom came to me. She is the breath of the power of God, and a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty. She is the brightness of the everlasting light, the mirror of the power of God, the image of His goodness. She is more beautiful than the sun, and above all the order of the stars. She teacheth temperance and prudence, justice and fortitude. She sweetly ordereth all things. I loved her from my youth, I desired to make her my spouse, I was a lover of her beauty. By means of her I shall obtain immortality, and leave behind me a memorial to them that come after me.”¹

¹ Wisdom vii. and viii.

Britomart, or Spenser's Ideal of Woman.

I SUPPOSE that few, even of us who love the Faery Queene, have read it right through. We set out joyfully in the early morning with the Knight and Una; we wandered with them through the Wood of Error, entered the House of Pride, accompanied Una and her lion into the Home of Superstition, and lived with her amongst the woodland folk. We entered the Cavern of Despair, dwelt in the House of Celestial Discipline, and climbing the heavenly hill, saw the path which led ever upwards to the gate of Heaven. If the fight with the Dragon became a little tedious, we were gladdened by passages of exquisite beauty and deep spiritual teaching. Delighted with the first book, we passed onwards: but, alas! in the second our interest began to flag. We could not feel for Sir Guyon the sympathy we did for the Red Cross Knight. We got sleepy in the House of Goldenmean. Pyrochles and Cymochles, *et id genus omne*, were somewhat tiresome. True, we passed a pleasant time on the lake and in the Bower of Blisse, and descended gladly into the Cave of Mammon, but we cared not for the details of Alma's kitchen, and we confess to having skipped the Chronicles of Brute. And as we went on the interest was less and less sustained—we seemed shut up in a labyrinthine forest, in which we were ever meeting knights and ladies, pursued or pursuing; the *dramatis personæ* became too numerous and too impersonal.

Milton rightly classes Spenser with Scotus and

Aquinas,¹ for into the spirit of the Renaissance, into alien lives and modes of thought he cannot enter ; he wants the large scope and insight of his contemporary Shakespeare, and so he idealises exclusively his own personal experiences, the lives of those he knew, and the history of his own time, and he makes us giddy at last, by leading us round and round in a confined space ; as Dean Church says : " The poem became an elastic framework, into which the poet could fit whatever interested him, and tempted him to composition ". " So multifarious is it, so full of all that he thought, or observed, or felt ; a receptacle without much care to avoid repetition, or to prune, correct and condense all the abundance of his ideas, as they welled forth in his mind day by day. It is a collection of separate tales and allegories, as much as the Arabian Nights, and so as a whole it is confusing, and its continued interest breaks down. We can hardly lose our way in it, for there is no way to lose. It is a wilderness in which we are left to wander, but there may be interest and pleasure in a wilderness." ²

Yes, there is abundance of interest and pleasure ; the Faery Queene is a rich treasure-house of beautiful imagery, the poet's feeling makes all nature live, the music of his verse charms the ear, and the lofty thoughts, the high spiritual teaching make men aspire to lead a nobler life. He felt, as his friend Sidney taught, that one function of a poet is to show us, not what we are, but what we ought to be, for " whatsoever the philosopher sayeth should be done, the poet giveth a perfect picture of it in some one, by whom he presupposeth it was done," ³ and thus he doth " possess the sight of the

¹ Areopagitica.

² Men of Letters—Spenser (Dean Church).

³ Sidney's Apologie for Poetrie.

soule". Spenser sought to lift the lives of his contemporaries into the region of the ideal, to make men feel that evil is no mere abstraction, but that this world, that the England in which they lived, was a true faerie-land, in which they were to fight against evil; that the simple and the weak are transfigured by the armour of light, and if taught and guided by truth, are enabled to lead heroic lives. In this faith, he sought "to fashion noble persons," men and women, in such virtuous and gentle discipline, as should enable them to recognise and overcome evil in all its many disguises; he set before them an ideal to which they might aspire; he sang of his fellow-countrymen, not as they were, but as he would have them be; he saw in vision, his Queen sending forth warriors brave and devoted, to contend, first with what he regarded as the incarnation of wickedness, the mystery of iniquity, and afterwards with evil in its many forms, open and insidious.

Still, in this wilderness of the later books, there are some passages we would not willingly have missed, and some teaching regarding the inner life as beautiful and true as the lessons of book i.

Specially interesting for us is the story of the Lady Knight. We know what was Spenser's general design, "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline". I think by the story of Britomart he sought to fashion a true woman.

Britomart is different from all the ladies we have met in the earlier books. She is a real woman, *propria personâ*, not merely the usual appendage of a knight. She sets forth alone, and proves herself no mere satellite, for she owns a squire. We are at once interested in her career, and we long to follow her path, but we soon find ourselves in a labyrinth, and we wish for a

guide. Such a guide I would be to those who desire to learn the poet's thoughts about women.

How beautiful is his first introduction to her! We marvel that one whose life was passed in so much trouble and turmoil, should have been able to depict not only scenes of wild strife, but should have sat as it were by some woodland lake, and patiently looked down into the unruffled transparent depths of a young girl's heart, should have been able to paint a picture as charming and simple as Mrs. Browning's Swan's Nest.

Let us follow the story. In the classic region of Deheubarth in South Wales, at the court of her father Ryence, lived the Princess Britomart. She was no pale, sickly maiden, but one whose physical frame had been developed by healthy exercise. There she had been

"Trained up in warlike stowre
To tossen speare and shield, and to affrap
The warlike ryder to his most mishap".

(Book iii., canto 2, v. 6.)

She says,

"Sithence I loathed have my life to lead,
As ladies wont, in pleasure's wanton lap,
To finger the fine needle and nyce thread,
Me lever were with point of foeman's spear be dead".

Is this the poet's ideal? No gentle maiden, passive and retiring, but a bold warrior? Yes, a warrior! For men and women are alike enrolled as soldiers of Christ. In early years must their whole being be strengthened by the use of those powers which make us men; all must bear the weight of the heavenly armour, and wield the sword of the spirit. The doctrine of Fainéance, sometimes preached to women, would have been impossible for a subject of Elizabeth

who believed in his Queen and his Country ; and such teaching would have been an anachronism in the sixteenth century, while four great Queens, for good or for evil, were changing the current of history—Catharine of France, and Mary of Scotland, representing to Spenser and his friends an incarnation of evil ; Jeanne d'Albret, the Warrior-Queen, and their own Elizabeth, the Champions of Good.

Ryence owned a magic globe or mirror, such as we read the Egyptian magicians used ; it was cunningly contrived by Merlin :—

“ It vertue had to shew in perfect sight
 Whatever thing was in the world contaynd,

 Forthy it round and hollow shaped was,
 Like to the world itselfe, and seem'd a world of glas.”
 (Book iii., canto 2, v. 19.)

One day Britomart entered her father's study, and looked into the mirror ; at first she saw only the reflection of herself, then it occurred to her to wish that she might see her future husband. This is the subject of our first window.

“ Eftsoones there was presented to her eye
 A comely knight, all arm'd in complete wize,
 Through whose bright ventayle, lifted up on hye,
 His manly face, that did his foes agrize
 And frends to terms of gentle truce entize
 Lookt foorth, as Phoebus face out of the east.”
 (Book iii., canto 2, v. 24.)

Our maiden warrior then has learned in the quiet home, from the example and teaching of a noble-minded father, to form a high ideal of manly perfection. With this vision in her soul, she will be secure from all meaner influences, she will pass safely through worldly temptations ; she will recognise the true knight when

she sees him, and will be content with nothing less than that true love.

"Most sacred fyre that burneth mightily
In living breasts, ykindled first above,
Emongst th' eternall spheres and lamping sky."
(Canto 3, v. i.)

Old Glauce, Britomart's nurse, soon perceives that a change has come over the Princess, and obtains from her the confession that she loves

"But th' only shade and semblance of a knight".

So it was with Arthur. It was a vision seen in a dream which kindled in him the flame of love. It was a glorious ideal to be followed here on earth, to be found in heaven.

Glauce thinks the Princess bewitched. She first takes her to church, and then tries the effect of charms in vain: finally they resolve to visit in disguise the framer of the mirror, and learn from him the name of the knight whom Britomart had seen. Merlin, in spite of their disguise, recognises them at once; he tells them that the knight is Arthegal, brother of the Cornish King. He prophesies the union of Britomart and Arthegal, and foretells the future glories of their posterity. Lord Grey of Wilton is doubtless the political Sir Arthegal, but into the historic allusions I do not propose to enter.

Britomart and Glauce return, but not to remain in the quiet home. She feels she must go forth to seek her ideal knight. It seems that our heroine's mother is dead, her father is engaged in constant warfare. For her there are no longer home duties; the quiet training-time is past, the vision she has seen, the prophecy of Merlin, her own longings for action call her away. But first she enters the church. This is the subject of our

second window. There hangs the armour of a brave Queen, Angela ; clothing herself in this angelic armour, the counterpart of that of the Red Cross Knight, she sets forth, accompanied by Glauce, who is disguised as her squire. And one weapon she takes of mighty strength,—not to wound, but to protect,—a long spear which could throw to the ground every assailant, the ebon spear of womanly dignity and self-respect.

“For never wight so fast in sell could sit,
But him perforce unto the ground it bore ;
Both speare she tooke and shield which hong by it ;
Both speare and shield of great powre, for her purpose fit.”

(Book iii., canto 3, v. 60.)

And now we must pick up a few threads of our story. At the end of book ii. we have read of the destruction of the Bower of an Enchantress, Acrasia, by Sir Guyon, the Knight of Temperance ; he and Arthur seem then to have returned to the house of Alma, and afterwards proceeding on their way, they met the disguised Princess. Sir Guyon immediately resolved to try his strength against the stranger, and was surprised to find himself thrown to the ground by the magic spear. He wished to renew the battle, but abstained at length, being persuaded by Arthur that he would suffer no disgrace by giving up the contest—that his defeat was the fault of his horse and his page, and that the spear was endued with magic power.

It seems strange that Sir Guyon should attack Britomart without provocation. Does our poet mean that the first use to which she is to put her spear is to teach others self-restraint, or temperance, in the larger sense in which Spenser uses the word ?

“For she was full of amiable grace
And manly terror, mixed therewithall ;
That as the one stired up affections bace

So th' other did men's rash desires apall,
 And hold them backe that would in error fall ;
 As he that hath espide a vermeill rose
 To which sharp thornes and breres the way forstall,
 Dare not for dread his hardy hand expose,
 But wishing it far off, his ydle wish doth lose."

(Book iii., canto 1, v. 46.)

Accordingly Britomart and Sir Guyon make peace, and in company with Arthur travel on awhile together ; then an adventure separates them. Britomart, proceeding alone, comes to a castle where she sees one knight assailed by six others. With her magic spear, she throws four of them to the ground, and the others yield. This is the subject of our third window. The rescued knight proves to be our friend of the Red Cross. The knights who attack him are vowed to the service of one who will compel all to declare her the fairest ; he will not be unfaithful to Una, hence he is assailed. When the contest is over, the victors are invited to spend the night in the castle, but they find it no fitting abode, and Britomart's life is saved by the Knight of Holiness. Setting out early the next morning they fall into discourse. The Knight of the Red Cross has learned that his companion is a lady, and asks

" What uncouth wind
 Brought her into those partes, and what inquest
 Made her dissemble her disguised kind :
 Faire lady she him seemed, like lady drest,
 But fairest knight alive, when armed was her breast."

(Book iii., canto 2, v. 4.)

Then Britomart prepares a cunning tale—one image is ever before her mind, of one knight only does she thirst for tidings, but she would not betray to strangers her heart's secret, so she inquires

"Tydings of one that hath unto me donne
Late foule dishonour and reproachful spight,
The which I seek to wreake, and Arthegal he hight".
(Canto 2, v. 8.)

She starts back half ashamed of her words, but she dares not recall them.

"Her shortly answered: 'Faire martiall mayd,
Certes ye misavised been t' upbrayd
A gentle knight with so unknightly blame;
For, weet ye well, of all that ever played
At hilt or tourney, or like warlike game,
The noble Arthegal hath ever borne the name'."

"The royall mayd woxe inly wondrous glad
To hear her love so highly magnifyde;
And joyd that ever she affixed had
Her hart on knight so goodly glorifyde
However finely she it faind to hyde."

(Book iii., canto 2, v. 9, 11.)

Her feigning has been so successful, that she is emboldened to go on, and by her opposition tempt the Red Cross Knight to sing the praises which are the sweetest music to her ear. He tells her that none may match the prowess of Arthegal.

"Ne soothlich is it easie for to rede
Where now on earth, or how he may be found;
For he ne wonneth in one certeine stead,
But restless walketh all the world around,
Ay doing things that to his fame redound,
Defending Ladies cause, and Orphans right."

(Book iii., canto 2, v. 14.)

After a while the Red Cross Knight takes a different road, and we enter upon Britomart's second adventure. Her first work had been to show the base thinkers what a true woman is; her second is especially a woman's work too. It is to rescue a lost sister from the snares of temptation.

Following Britomart, we pass over the story of Marinell and others, until we reach canto 11. Britomart is then wandering with our old friend of book i., Sir Satyrane, in search of a wicked giant. She finds a knight lying on the grass, and groaning piteously. This knight is Sir Scudamore; he explains the cause of his outcries against the justice of Heaven. His lady Amoret has been shut up by a cruel enchanter; in vain has he tried to enter the castle in order to release her. There is no gate to shut him out, but

"A flaming fire, ymixt with smouldry smoke
And stinking sulphur.

.
neither may
This fire be quencht by any witt or might,
Ne yet by any meanes remov'd away
So mighty be th' enchantments which the same do stay."
(Canto 11, v. 21, 23.)

Nothing daunted, the lady knight addresses herself to the danger, declaring

"I will, with prooffe of last extremity,
Deliver her fro thence, or with her for you dy.
(Canto 11, v. 18.)

The following scene is given in our fourth window; it brings to our minds one who was ever seeking to recover those who have gone astray, to find the lost piece of silver.

"Therewith, resolv'd to prove her utmost might,
Her ample shield she threw before her face,
And her sword's point directing forward right
Assayld the flame; the which eftsoone gave place,
And did itselfe divide with equall space,
That through she passed, as a thunder bolt
Perceth the yielding ayre and doth displace
The soring clouds into sad showres ymolt;
So to her yold the flames, and did their force revolt."
(Book iii., canto 11, v. 25.)

In vain does Sir Scudamore seek to follow: he is "forst backe to retire, all scorcht and pitifully brent," for this is only woman's work. Guarded by the shield of faith, armed with the sword of the spirit, the pure-minded maiden passes unharmed through the pestilent atmosphere of unholy passion, to deliver her lost sister. Here in the dungeon of an enchanter, she seeks one, tempted and ensnared, but not yielding to sin; one suffering and resisting.

How has she been ensnared? We know how, as we enter the empty chamber of imagery, and see traced on the walls the mythic legends which, as Plato taught, corrupt the very springs of religion, defiling the imagination.

"For round about, the walls yclothed were
With goodly arras of great majesty.

And in those tapests weren fashioned
Many faire pourtraicts and many a faire feat.

And eke all Cupid's warres they did repeate
And cruell battailes, which he whilome fought
Gainst all the Gods to make his empire great,
Besides the huge massacres, which he wrought
On mighty kings and kesars into thraldome brought."

(Book iii., canto 11, v. 28, 29.)

We see how Amoret, led on by curiosity, had at first dwelt in imagination on forbidden thoughts; encouraged by the words "Be bold," written over every door, she had entered room after room, and then the last door had closed on her, and return has become impossible. But over the pure-minded Britomart such visions have no power. She goes through the rooms, empty for her; she passes unharmed the altar on which stands a golden image of the god.

"Blyndfold he was ; and in his cruell fist
A mortall bow and arrowes keen did hold,
With which he shot at random, when him list,
Some headed with sad lead, some with pure gold ;
(Ah man ! beware how thou those dartes behold !)"
(Book iii., canto 11, v. 48.)

No ! there is nothing which the wicked enchanter has
in common with her, they are of alien nature ; and so
to her all the rooms appear void and silent, and he
seems unconscious of her presence. Our readers will
remember how this contrasts with Comus,

"Break off, break off, I feel the different pace
Of some chaste footing near about this ground".

Over every door, as she wanders on, she reads the
words "Be bold" ; at length she reaches one, over
which are inscribed the words, "Be not too bold".
Against her that door is closed, though to Amoret
it had stood open. There till eventide she waits,
but armed and watchful.

"She drew herselfe aside in sickernesse
And her wel-pointed wepons did about her dresse."
(Canto 11, v. 55.)

In the dead of night, in those hours in which

"There wander forth the sons of Belial,"

a fearful storm begins to rage

"And an earthquake, as if it streight would loose
The world's foundations from his centre fixt ;
A direfull stench of smoke and sulphur mixt
Ensewd, whose noyaunce fill'd the fearfull sted
From the forth howre of night until the sixt ;
Yet the bold Britonesse was nought ydred,
Though much emmov'd, but stedfast still persevered."
(Book iii., canto 12, v. 2.)

Then as in Comus, comes forth the enchanter with
his train, "the Route of Cupid". Ease and Self-

indulgence, with theatrical gestures and a laurel wreath lead the band, for the most self-indulgent make the greatest show and pretence of labour and suffering. Then walks forth to the sound of delicious melting music, Fancy clothed in vesture of rainbow hues; Desire, Doubt, Danger, Feare, and Hope entice the crowd onwards, yet ever are they accompanied by Deceit and Suspicion. Then come Grief and Fury, Displeasure and Pleasaunce; at last the object of our search enters.

Had Amoret become one of the troop, there would have been no deliverance for her. But she suffers; her heart is transfixed with the deadly dart, and the blood is dropping from her wounded breast.¹ Cupid follows her, riding on a lion, and after him come Reproach, Repentance, Shame, Strife, Extravagance, Lewd-Losse-of-Time, and the Sorrow which worketh death.

“ There were full many moe like maladies,
Whose names and natures I note reden well;
So many moe, as there be phantasies
In wavering wemen's witt, that none can tell,
Or paines in love, or punishments in hell:
All which disguised marcht in masking-wise
About the chamber by the damozell;
And then returned having marched thrise,
Into the inner rowme from whence they first did rise.”

(Book iii., canto 12, v. 26.)

No sooner however have they entered, than the door closes; Britomart, coming out of her concealment, endeavours to force it, but in vain. She resolves to remain till the following night, and then, when the door opens, to force an entrance. In solitude and fasting she awaits the darkness. If she had before doubted

¹ Was this imagery suggested by the Mexican rites? The victim's heart was torn from him and presented still quivering on the altar of the god.

her strength, or hesitated at the words "Be not too bold," the thought of Amoret's pierced heart now restored her courage.

"All that day she outwore in wandering
And gazing on that chamber's ornament,
Till that againe the second evening
Her covered with her sable vestiment
Wherewith the world's faire beautie she hath blent,
Then when the second watch was almost past,
That brazen door flew open, and in went
Bold Britomart . . . "

In her pure presence the spectres of evil cannot abide.
All are gone, except the evil one who has riveted the
cruel chains; even Amoret sees them no more.

"Ne living wight she saw in all that roome,
Save that same woefull lady, both whose hands
Were bounden fast, that did her ill become,
And her small waste girt round with yron bands
Upon a brasen pillour, by the which she stands.

"And her before the vile enchanter sate
Figuring the straunge characters of his art:
With living blood he those characters wrote
Dreadfully dropping from her dying hart,
Seeming transfixed with a cruell dart.

His thousand charmes could not her stedfast hart remove."
(Book iii., canto 12, v. 29, 30, 31.)

She is safe, like the lady in Comus, because she too
could say:—

"Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind
With all thy charms".

Britomart overthrows him, but at Amoret's entreaty
spares his life that he may reverse his charms. Our
readers will remember how the brothers in Comus
allow the enchanter to escape, ere he has done this,
and the lady has to be restored by the pure stream of
Sabrina. The thought seems to be that no violence can

save, but he who had woven the web must unwind it ; by the discovery of his wickedness, his glozing lies must be proved to be such, then only can his victim be delivered from his snares.

“ At last that mighty chaine, which round about
Her tender waste was wound, adowne gan fall
And that great brasen pillour broke in pieces small.”

“ The cruell steele which thrild her dying hart,
Fell softly forth as of his owne accord.”

(Book iii., canto 12, v. 37, 38.)

The end of book iii. finds the two ladies together searching for Sir Scudamore. Thus does it close without Britomart's having even seen her knight. Meanwhile, Sir Scudamore, in company with Glauce, had wandered away in despair.

The subject of book iv. is friendship. We shall pass over all that does not refer to our Lady Knight. In the first canto we find her travelling with Amoret in search of Sir Arthegal. Amoret is at first shy of her, but Britomart, taking off her helmet, reveals her sex, and then they travel like sisters, for Britomart must not only rescue, she must continue for awhile Amoret's guide and protector ; but her very goodness exposes her to suspicion. Our old friend, Duessa, meets Sir Scudamore. She is accompanied by Ate, and they have little difficulty in sowing suspicion in the heart of the despairing lover. He is distracted by jealous fears, and at the end of canto 5 we find him vainly endeavouring to rest in the House of Care. Feelingly does Spenser describe his nightmares—

“ And evermore, when he to sleepe did thinke,
The hammer's sound his senses did molest ;
And evermore when he began to winke,
The bellowes noyse disturb'd his quiet rest,
Ne suffered sleepe to settle in his breast.

And all the night the dogs did bark and howle
 About the house, at scent of stranger guest :
 And now the crowing cocke, and now the owle
 Lowde shriking, afflicted him to the very sowle."

(Book iv., canto 5, v. 41.)

Full of misery, he leaves the house, and meets an armed knight who refuses to give his name, but desires to be called the Salvage Knight. They soon find that they are in search of a common enemy in the person of one who bore an ebon spear. The Salvage Knight has been overthrown by her, and Sir Scudamore believes her a traitor who, in defiance of all knighthood, has stolen from him his lady, whilst pretending to rescue her from an enchanter.

As they are speaking, Britomart rides up alone. Thus does she meet her ideal knight. She is returning triumphant from her quest, when she is assailed by the voice of slander. Glauce, who might have told the truth to Sir Scudamore, is bound to silence, and Britomart, misknown, has to bear the fierce assaults of him, whom, though unknown, she loves. But it is not the true Britomart whom he assails; it is the Britomart partly concealed through her own maidenly pride, but hidden also by the murky cloud of evil imaginings conjured up by the witch. Through sorrow and suffering is her beauty to be revealed. Sir Scudamore furiously attacks her; he is thrown to the ground, and so is Arthegal—the latter, however, leaps up, kills her horse, and compels her to fight with her sword at close quarters, so that her spear avails not, and at length he strikes off her ventayle, and then she vanquishes him. But how? Not by the spear, which she has lost—not by the sword, for her woman's strength cannot match his—Arthegal is conquered, not by the armed knight, but by the revelation of the

true woman. Is there any poet who can paint as Spenser can, the beauty shining through, and transfiguring the veil of flesh? Surely he is the Fra Angelico of poets. Look at his picture of Una alone in the forest—of Faith and Hope in the house of Cœlia—and at this picture of Britomart :—

“ With that her angels face unseene afore
Like to the ruddie morne appeard in sight ;
Deawed with silver drops through sweating sore,
But somewhat redder than beseem'd aright,
Through toylesome heate and labour of her weary fight.

“ And round about the same her yellow heare,
Having through stirring loosd their wonted band,
Like to a golden border did appeare
Framed in goldsmithes forge with cunning hand :
Yet goldsmithes cunning could not understand.
To frame such subtle wire, so shinie clear :
For it did glister like the golden sand,
The which Pactolus with his waters shere
Throws forth upon the rivage round about him nere.”

(Book iv., canto 6, v. 19, 20.)

Thus did the pure-hearted maiden shine forth in all her glory—more beautiful for her humiliation and defeat, and in her Arthegal does homage to his ideal, as she recognises hers in him.

This is the subject of our fifth window.

“ And he himselfe, long gazing thereupon,
At last fell humbly downe upon his knee,
And of his wonder made religion,
Weening some heavenly goddesse he did see.”

(Canto 6, v. 22.)

But she is not pacified by his homage. Can he be a true knight who thus attacks a stranger unprovoked? She will, though only a woman, though one against two, yet carry on the fight. Then Glauce, who knows “their error,” intercedes for peace, and Arthegal, lifting his beaver, reveals the knight of the mirrour.

"That comely knight, all arm'd in complete wize,
Through whose bright ventayle, lifted up on hye,
His manly face, that did his foes agrize,
And frends to termes of gentle truce entize
Lookt foorth, as Phœbus face out of the east."

(Book iii., canto 2, v. 24.)

And she beholding

"the lovely face of Arthegal
Tempred with sternesse and stout majestie,
Therewith her wrathful courage gan appall,
And haughty spirits meekly to adaw
That her enhaunced hand she downe can soft withdraw".

(Book iv., canto 6, v. 26.)

In vain does she try to continue the fight—she cannot lift her weapon against him, and when she tries to reproach him further,

"Natheless her tongue not to her will obeyd,
But brought forth speeches myld when she would have missayd".

(V. 27.)

Sir Scudamore too repents of his foolish jealousy, and learns that Amoret, after her rescue, had mysteriously disappeared whilst Britomart was sleeping in the forest.

They all take up their abode in a neighbouring castle, and remain there until they have recovered from their wounds. Arthegal woos Britomart:—

"she yielded her consent
To be his love, and take him for her lord,
Till they with marriage meet might finish that accord".

(Book iv., canto 6, v. 41, 42.)

But ere this may be, there is work to be done by both of them. Arthegal may not rest until he has accomplished the quest entrusted to him by the Faery Queene; he leaves Britomart, promising to return in three months, and she accompanies Scudamore to the forest in which she had lost Amoret.

Book v. is entitled "The Legend of Arthegal or

Justice". The work he had to do was to save a distressed damsel Irena (*i.e.* Ireland) from Grantorto, apparently the monster of sedition, whom Justice has not *yet* subdued. We are told that from a child he had been educated by Astræa—that she had given him a wondrous sword, which Jove had proved against the Titans, and he is accompanied by a squire.

" His name was Talus, made of yron mould
 Immoveable, resistlesse, without end ;
 Who in his hand an yron flae did hould
 With which he thresht out falshood, and did truth unfould."
 (Book v., canto 1, v. 12.)

Two verses at the beginning of canto 4 explain to us that Arthegal is Justice, and Talus is Power, the minister of Justice.

We pass over most of the intervening cantos, though we should like to notice one, in which Arthegal contends with a giant who wishes to rearrange the Universe. Neither will we follow in detail the fortunes of Arthegal, as he exposes the false Florimel, and the vain pretensions of Braggadochio, and assists at the marriage of the true Florimel with Marinel.

The following episode was probably suggested by a story in which Raleigh seems to have believed, regarding a community of Amazons in the New World. In book ii. Spenser writes—

" Many great regions are discovered
 Which to late age were never mentioned.
 Who ever heard of th' Indian Peru ?
 Or who in venturous vessell measured
 The Amazon's huge river now found true ?"

This myth changed the name of the river Orellana to the Amazon. But there were other Amazons nearer home, who were intending to make war on the Knights of Faery, if we may trust a curious document in the

44 BRITOMART, OR SPENSER'S IDEAL OF WOMAN

State Paper Office, dated 1588, by which we find that 7,000 women were to have been brought over by the Armada, to draw over the English to Romanism.

Arthegal, proceeding on his way, approaches with his squire a city called Amazone; there they find a crowd of women dragging a knight to the gallows; with the help of Talus's iron flail all are put to flight, and Arthegal then learns that Sir Terpin, being subdued by the Amazon Queen, had preferred death to disgraceful bondage.

"For all those knights, the which by force or guile
She doth subdue, she fowly doth entreate :
First, she doth them of warlike armes despoile,
And clothe in womens weedes ; and then with threat
Doth them compell to worke, to earne their meat,
To spin, to card, to sew, to wash, to wring ;
Ne doth she give them other thing to eat
But bread and water or like feeble thing,
Them to dishable from revenge adventuring."

(Book v., canto 4, v. 31.)

Here we have another ideal of woman. Rhadigund worships self, for she looks up to none greater—her will is to be the law of all. She degrades others by making them think meanly of themselves, taking from them their knightly armour, and clothing them in women's weeds, and she makes them wear out all manliness, by living a mean life.

Sir Arthegal rescues Terpin, and driving the women before him approaches the city; the gates are shut, and the Amazon Queen bids defiance to him, making the following conditions,

"That if I vanquish him, he shall obey
My law, and ever to my lore be bound ;
And so will I, if me he vanquish may".

(Book v., canto 4, v. 49.)

We need not dwell upon the details of the combat ;

Rhadigund fights with blind fury, with the violence which is not strength.

"She hewd, she foynd, she lasht, she laid on every side."

He calmly stands on the defensive, watching his opportunity. At length he stuns her by a blow on the helmet; he kneels down and unlaces it, and as he discovers her face, there rises before him the image of another woman, of her whom his soul loved. Rhadigund too was beautified by her sufferings, and for a moment the harshness is gone.

"A miracle of nature's goodly grace
In her faire visage voide of ornament,
But bath'd in bloud and sweat together ment;
Which in the rudenesse of that evil plight
Bewray'd the signes of feature excellent;
Like as the moone in foggie winter's night,
Doth seeme to be herselfe, though darkened be her light."

(Book v., canto 5, v. 12.)

Everywhere we trace Milton's familiarity with Spenser. Did this passage suggest *Paradise Lost*, book i., lines 591-597?

"His form had not yet lost
All her original brightness, nor appeared
Less than archangel ruined, and the excess
Of glory obscured: as when the sun new risen
Looks through the horizontal misty air
Shorn of his beams, or, from behind the moon,
In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight sheds."

Moved with ruth at the sight, he casts from him his "sharpe sword"; she, recovering from her swoon, and seeing her enemy standing over her pitying and unarmed, meanly seizes her advantage; Arthegal will not allow Talus to rescue him by force from the doom which his own lips have sealed.

"So was he overcome; not overcome."

He has fallen not into sin, but into misfortune, not as

a bad man falls, but as a good one, through pity for the weak, through trusting an ungenerous foe, through showing kindness to the wicked. Had he fallen into sin, far other would have been his lot, had he yielded to the temptations placed in his way, he would have been clothed in purple; but throughout his captivity he is faithful to Britomart.

"Then took the Amazon this noble knight,
Left to her will by his own wilfull blame,
And caused him to be disarmed quight
Of all the ornaments of knightly name.

And broke his sword for feare of further harmes,
With which he wont to stirre up battailous alarmes."

(Book v., canto 5, v. 20, 21.)

Thus was his spirit broken, and then,

"Amongst them all she placed him most low,
And in his hand a distaffe to him gave,
That he thereon should spin both flax and tow;
A sordid office for a mind so brave;
So hard it is to be a woman's slave.
Yet he it tooke in his owne selves despight
And thereto did himselfe right well behave."

(V. 23.)

He lies here in prison, a true man, yet sunk in despondency; his error has deprived him of the strength, the manliness, the faith, by which *alone* he can burst his bonds. As woman's treachery has ensnared, so woman's devotion is needed to lift him up once more to faith. As a later poet has taught, a woman, though weak in herself, yet by her faith and trust may lift a man up to believe in himself, and so save him.

"Believe in me, at once you bid
Myself believe that, since one soul has disengaged
Mine from the shows of things, so much is fact: I waged
No foolish warfare, then with shades, myself a shade
Here in the world."¹

¹ Browning's *Fifine*, page 99.

Is it not needful for us, sometimes, when we have got into some dark prison house, when we can no wise lift up ourselves to noble works, and the old heroic thoughts seem things of the past—when all our work is servile drudgery, and we despise ourselves; is it not sometimes needful, that one who loves us, should come and set us free, should clothe us once more with the shield of faith, with the panoply of God, should lift us up from that worst sin, which is the paralysis of all effort after good?

“Self-love, my liege, is not so vile a sin
As self-contemning.”

More than twice three months have passed, and Britomart is sitting disconsolately, her window opening toward the west, when she sees Talus coming. Having heard the sad news of her captive knight, she retires to her chamber; she does not exhaust herself with paroxysms of grief,

“As women wont but with deep sighes and singults few;”
prompt to action, she soon sets forth,

“To seek her knight, as Talus her did guide”.
(Book v., canto 6, v. 13, 18.)

On the road she is in danger from the snares of Dolan who invites her to rest in his cave. In the night she wanders restlessly in her bowre, and at midnight,

“What time the native Belman of the night,
The bird that warned Peter of his fall,
First rings his silver Bell t’ each sleepy wight,
That should their mindes up to devotion call,
She heard a wondrous noise below the hall:
All sodainely the bed, where she should lie,
By a false trap was left adowne to fall
Into a lower room, and by and by
The loft was rayسد again, that no man could it spy”.

(V. 27.)

Then she is attacked, but the foes are driven off by Talus. Thus does the Knight of Purity by her watchfulness escape the snares of deceit.

Upon the vision in "Isis Church" we cannot dwell. Encouraged by prophecies of victory, she goes forward, and pitches her tent without the walls of Amazone. She defies Rhadigund, and they enter the lists.

Rhadigund proposes the usual promise, but Britomart refuses to bind herself,

"For her no other terms should ever tie,
Then what prescribed were by laws of chevalrie".

(Canto 7, v. 28.)

Britomart, who seems never to have wielded her ebon spear since she used it against Sir Arthegal, after desperate combat, strikes her sword through the Amazon's helmet,

"That it enpierced to the very braine,
And her proud person low prostrated on the plaine".

(V. 33.)

Talus and she enter the town and seek the prison-house, but she will not make Arthegal feel his degradation by looking on him; in her eyes he is the noble Knight of Justice.

"At last when as to her owne Love she came,
Whom like disguise no lesse deformed had,
At sight thereof abasht with secret shame,
She turned her head aside.

"Thenceforth she streight into a bowre him brought,
And caused him those uncomely weeds undight
And in their stede for other rayment sought;
Whereof there was great store, and armors bright,
Which had been reft from many a noble knight,
Whom that proud Amazon subdewed had,
Whilst Fortune favoured her successe in fight:
In which when as she him anew had clad,
She was reviv'd and joyd much in his semblance glad."

(Book v., canto 7, v. 38, 41.)

And then having restored the thralls of Rhadigund to their rightful rank, she resigns the rule, which necessity had laid upon her, and all do homage to Arthegal.

“For all those knights, which long in captive shade
Had shrouded bene, she did from thralldom free,
And magistrates of all that city made,
And gave to them great living and large fee :
And that they should for ever faithfull bee
Made them sweare fealty to Arthegal.”

(V. 43.)

And so ends the story of Britomart as far as Spenser has written it. No, there is one word more. Again her part is not to do but to suffer—not to keep him as would the Amazon Queen in bonds of servitude, falsely called the bonds of love, but to bid him God-speed, as he leaves her once more to finish his as yet unaccomplished quest.

This is the subject of our last window.

“Full sad and sorowfull was Britomart
For his departure, her new cause of grieve,
Yet wisely moderated her own smarte,
Seeing his honor, which she tendred chiefe,
Consisted much in that adventure's priefe :
The cause whereof, and hope of his successe
Gave unto her great comfort and reliefe ;
That womanish complaints she did repress,
And tempered for the time her present heavinesse.”

(V. 44.)

I may perhaps thus gather up the teachings of the poet :—

1. His ideal woman grows up in a sheltered home, and is exercised in all vigorous and strengthening exercises of body and mind.
2. There she learns to know what a true man is, to realise this ideal in herself, and to seek it in others.

3. She learns to feel that she has a place to fill and a work to do, and that if she is faithful to her calling, she will not have lived in vain.

4. In this faith she takes from the Church the heavenly armour, and goes forth into the World, feeling that her womanly self-respect is her all-sufficient protection.

5. And when as she enters it, she finds a base ideal set up for worship, and the heart even of the Red Cross Knight failing in the contest with the champions of sin; when evil men maintain that none are better than the woman they know, then *one* noble-minded woman is able to restore faith in womanhood, and to strike down the liars.

6. And when, through necessity, she enters into the society of the wicked, the Knight of Holiness is with her to protect and to lead her on her journey.

7. Her first great work, which she must accomplish alone, is to seek and save a weaker sister ensnared by the baits of vain imaginations.

8. Whilst bravely doing the work which her hand finds to do, she must suffer misrepresentation and evil-speaking, and be condemned even by the just, and by those she has helped.

9. But through such trials her truth and goodness shine forth the brighter, and thus she learns to know the ideal she has sought for.

10. Still no perfect rest can be found on earth—both she and her knight must go farther to their appointed work.

11. When through mistaken trust and scrupulous truth, her knight has fallen into the snares of the wicked; when, losing faith in himself, he is unable to do noble deeds as of yore, and feels himself degraded, then she by her courage, love and trust restores him to himself.

12. Yet she does not, as a Rhadigund, seek to make him do *her* will, but restores him to freedom, and then yields up gladly the power, which for a while she had to use. And when the work is done, which they could accomplish together, and each has his own special duty, then she seeks not to detain him ; bravely, though sadly, she bids him farewell, content to wait till their work is done on earth, for that perfect union which is to be realised only in the peace of heaven.

King Lear : a Study.

Few plays of Shakespeare seem perhaps less attractive at first sight. Coleridge's objection occurs to most of us: "Lear is the only serious performance of Shakespeare, the interest and situation of which are derived from the assumption of a gross improbability." But I think there is none which, on a closer acquaintance, fulfils better all the conditions of a perfect tragedy. It is tragic from beginning to end. In the opening scene we hear the first muttering of the storm, the fitful gusts of that tempest which swells into a hurricane, and deafens us with its clamour: which subsides at last, but only to leave the landscape strewn with wrecks, the trees stripped of leaves and branches, and the massive oaks, the giants of the forest, prostrate. Although not classical in its execution, King Lear is Greek in its conception, and accomplishes what Aristotle conceives to be the end of tragedy, purifying us by pity and fear. Our gaze is turned, as in the noblest tragedies of Æschylus and Sophocles, almost without intermission, to one central suffering hero—great in his surroundings, great in his errors, great in his sufferings, yet "more sinned against than sinning"; one who wins, in spite of all his errors, and even his crimes, our pity and our love. We are allowed no respite: from first to last our feelings of indignation, terror, sympathy, are stirred, and the inward storms of passion are outwardly symbolised by the elemental conflict, and the noise of the battlefield. There is strife too within, for our judgment, our moral sense, condemns what our feelings excuse,

and we are not able to be quite without compassion even for the darkest villain of all. Yet, though Greek in its conception and barbaric in scenery, the play is in its deepest spirit Christian. It is throughout a protest against the theory of blind fate : men reap the harvest they have sown—

“ All friends do taste
The wages of their virtue, and all foes
The cup of their deservings ”.

And, if we except a very few irreconcilables, the agony is a purifying fire, and it is faith which gives the victory. The king recovers his lost faith in human virtue through the love of two faithful ones ; he had never lost his faith in God. The earl, who had through his greater sin lost even faith in the gods, is able at last to rest in peace,

“ Nor quarrel with their great opposeless wills ”.

As a musical study, too, the play seems to me a marvellous composition. The overture sets before us the chief themes, introducing us at once to Lear, his wicked daughters, and Cordelia, as also to Gloster, Edmund, and Kent, and reveals to us the selfish passions which are to swell to ever greater tumult, and bring about the final catastrophe. Then the music changes to pathetic tones, as we hear the pleading voice of her whose voice was “ ever gentle and low ” ; and, mediating between the two, we have the calm persistent strain, telling of a love not to be cast down, a loyalty faithful unto death.

The first scene has shown us the fierce passion in the royal household, the second shows us how similar passions are stirred in the heart of Gloster ; and then, like some intricate fugue, the two parallel themes are interlaced to the end,—and the tumult and clamour

swells until it reaches its climax at the beginning of act iii. Through the whole of that act, the strife rages within and without. Then the exhausted sufferers sink into repose, the healing process has begun ; and when, at last, faint and wounded, they are borne from the battlefield, we know by their changed voices, their altered tones, that adversity has done its work. The concluding act brings all once more upon the scene, the wicked are cast down, and the jarring discords cease, then a quiet cadence tells us that the sufferers are at rest, and some final notes recall the opening theme, and tell us that faith and love and duty will reign victorious over a renovated earth.

Yet grand as is the form and scenery of Lear, magnificent as it is in its conception as a whole, it seems to me unrivalled for its subtle analysis of feeling.

" I

Do love you more than words can wield the matter ; . . .
As much as child e'er loved."

" I find she names my very deed of love."

" I

Obey you, love you, and most honour you."

Thus speak the three sisters.

" Thee I have ever honour'd as my king,
Loved as my father,"

cries Kent.

" I loved her most,"

are Lear's words when casting off Cordelia.

" Peace be with Burgundy !
Since that respects of fortune are his love."

" Love's not love
When mingled with regards that stand
Aloof from th' entire point."

" 'Tis strange that from their cold'st neglect
My love should kindle."

(Act i., sc. i.)

Such are the reflections of Cordelia and of France.

Did these, all or any of them, truly love? Of course we put aside at once Goneril and Regan and Burgundy—gain is their good. But surely, we say, the old king loved his “dog-hearted” daughters! He gave them all, asking only in return their love. He was content to make his “nursery” with them; he had no other love, and, when theirs failed him, his poor heart broke.

Yet if love be the highest good, it must bless, and Lear’s did not bless his daughters: it fed their selfishness, it taught them to lie, at last it cursed them. No, his was mere affection or fondness, not love. He thought himself loving, because he wanted to be loved. He is contrasted with Kent, who, for love’s sake, threw away even the king’s love. Shakespeare would show how this greed of love degrades the character, and blinds the affections, making us value people not for what they are, but for their attachment (real or imaginary) to us.

“Better thou hadst not been born
Than not to have pleased *me* better.”

The contrast of the false love and the true, of Duessa and Fidessa, of the selfish and the self-forgetting, of that which degrades with that which purifies—that which enslaves, and that which redeems, has been the theme of poets in all ages, but it has not always been treated with Shakespeare’s discernment. Milton has truly depicted the base in Delilah, yet he would have Eve look no higher than Adam. We may doubt the love of an Alcestis, but not question, as some have done, her love, who would die but not sin for him whom she loved; who would rather he should perish than live degraded, who would with the fire of a loving hatred burn up the evil—for love is a con-

suming fire. The false love is not to be found only in the Helens, the Vivians, or in such as the brides of the Huguenot and the Black Brunswicker ; it is to be seen in the Rosie Mackenzies, the Rosamond Vinceys of the present day, who, in their petty selfishness, lay waste noble lives ; in kindred and friends, who cry out, " Better thou hadst not been born than not to have pleased me better," who hinder others from doing what duty bids, what honour commands, what God requires—saying to some brave heart, " this be far from thee," and then they turn away in anger from the stern reproof, " Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men ".

With this, Tennyson has contrasted the true love, content for love's sake not to be loved.

" Oh if an eye that's downward cast
Could make thee somewhat blench or fail,
Then be my love an idle tale
And fading legend of the past."

Doubtless there is joy in loving sympathy, it is the sunlight of life, the music of the soul—but the unselfish are never without this sympathy, for they ever share others' gladness and griefs, and learn that " it is more blessed to give than to receive ". And greed of love tempts to sin like any other greed, and to sins more terrible—" If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness ". Jealousy is a passion as much stronger than covetousness or ambition, as love is more than gain or glory—a passion incompatible with true love, but close as the shadow to its counterfeit, and the jealous person (a Tantalus) pines for love, yet never can he lift the cup to his parched and fevered lips. We cannot but regard with the deepest pity the victim of this sin, the Dejanira, who sees the intoler-

able agony she has brought on him whose life was more to her than her own.

But did Cordelia love her father? If so, why did she answer "Nothing," and "I love your majesty according to my bond : nor more nor less," "I obey you, love you, and most honour you"? (Act i., sc. i.) Cordelia is not apt at definitions, and she deals in paradox. We must admit with Gervinus that she is unphilosophical in her mode of expression, since her husband could not carry away half the love which belonged to her father ; yet she is evidently distinguishing between the filial love which she gave to Lear, and that love which she bestowed on France, the elect of her soul :—

" Haply, when I shall wed,
That lord whose hand must take my plight, shall carry
Half my love with him, half my care and duty ;
Sure I shall never marry like my sisters,
To love my father all ".

There are two kinds of affection, the one social, the other personal, the one binds us together as members of a family, a nation, etc. It is dependent upon some kind of relationship—to be without this feeling is to be unnatural, and we hold in abhorrence those who break the bonds of loyalty or piety (in the Latin sense)—the undutiful child, the traitor to his country. It may be said that such love is more or less selfish ; I would rather say it is love in its rudimentary state, it is the root out of which the larger love must grow, it develops into the highest, when we realise our oneness in the all-embracing love of God ; then the soul goes forth of self, and is born to a new and larger life, it feels the enthusiasm of humanity. To begin with the nearest is to climb slowly but surely, to begin with the enthusiasm of humanity is to try to fly to a mountain-top. Now Lear demanded the personal affection which must

be *won*, not *claimed*. Cordelia could not give to him such love as she gave to the noble king of France, but she did give to her father filial love, and so she answers :—

“ Good, my lord,
You have begot me, bred me, loved me ; I
Return those duties back, as are right fit ”.

And the special beauty of loyal love is this, that it is not destroyed by our faults, it is a steadfast, noble, God-like love, which loves on in spite of sin. Such love was kindled into a brighter glow in Kent when he saw the wilful king casting himself down into misery, and it made Edgar bless the father who had outlawed him and sought his life. There are perhaps depths of wickedness which may destroy even this love, and make one renounce allegiance to a sovereign, and even to a parent ; but how terrible is the strife, how awful the burden, is shown in such dramas as Orestes and Hamlet.

But there is another, a more personal love, which is kindled in us by the sight of wisdom and goodness—we see the light, and it sets our heart on fire, and because we love the goodness, we love the person in whom it shines—this latter I should call love, as distinguished from the former, which I have called piety or loyalty. Such is the love of France and Kent for Cordelia, and Cordelia and Kent for one another. We are inclined to say that it is nobler than the first, but each is perfect of its kind ; the last is the faculty by which man is drawn to God, and obeys the first commandment, by which his face is turned Godward, that so, seeing the Divine glory, he may be transformed into the same image ; the other is that by which he fulfils the second commandment, looks manward and blesses. Both are necessary ; love of goodness—of

God revealed in the good, would not alone purify; we need to love on through suffering, to pass through the furnace of affliction, that all base earthly elements may be destroyed, and we may be perfected, may learn to love as He loves who gives all, and can receive nothing, who makes His sun to shine on the evil and on the good. It is when the two loves are one, when the parent is beloved for his own sake, when the sovereign is the shepherd of his people, when he is worthy of love, to whom we are bound by ties of loyalty, that these two currents meet, and it was the double feeling which prompted the joyful songs of the Psalmist, "God is the King of all the earth, God sitteth upon His holy seat".

The subject of the play then is not personal affection, but that loyal love or piety which draws us first to those who are nearest, as members of one family, or state, or church, but afterwards binds us to all whose needs we can fill, unites us to all humanity. Its bonds are not broken by sin, it is a Christlike redeeming love, which must mingle with sorrow, ere suffering can purify. Lear claimed at first love rather than loyalty, he learned afterwards that it is authority, not merit, to which men bow, when he cried, "a dog's obeyed in office"; thus is society kept from anarchy by the rule even of the unworthy. Kent expressed his loyal love to his king, when he answered :—

"*Kent* : You have that in your countenance which I would fain call master.

"*Lear* : What's that?

"*Kent* : Authority."

This love was profaned by the two daughters in their conduct to their father, their husbands and one another, but it was glorified by Cordelia. Profaned by Edmund

in his conduct to his father and his brother, but glorified by Edgar. This bond Albany acknowledged in his forbearance to his wicked wife, and in his opposition to a foreign army, though the French cause was just. This is the theme of the play, giving unity to the thought; it is most clearly wrought out in the story of Lear and Gloster: each is through his folly or sin brought into the depths of misery—a misery which has no restoring power, a misery in which each would have been hopelessly engulfed, but for the redeeming piety of those they had wronged.

We are thrown at the opening of the play into a society in which there is lawlessness and the breach of those family relations which are the bond of all social life. A few words tell us of that sin of which Gloster now makes light, but for which he will afterwards atone with tears of blood, and then King Lear makes his demand upon his daughters. See how Shakespeare individualises each character; we hear the stately imperious loud-voiced Goneril of the “scornful eyes,” which “burn” (act ii., sc. iv.), of the “wolfish visage” (act i., sc. iv.),—the gentle and dependent Regan, but whose “warped looks” her father learned afterwards to “anatomise” (act iii., sc. vi.). Goneril loudly describes her love; Regan merely echoes her sister’s words:—

“I am made of that self metal as my sister,
And prize me at her worth. In my true heart
I find she names my very deed of love”.

(Act i., sc. i.)

And in their subsequent talk about their father (act i., sc. i.) she quietly adds a little aggravation to each fierce word of Goneril. Lear’s later words to Goneril:—

"How now, daughter! what makes that frontlet on? Methinks you are too much of late i' the frown,"

(Act i., sc. iv.)

and

"She hath looked black upon me; struck me with her tongue,"

and her subsequent harangues, show us the fierce virago. Lear contrasts her with her gentler sister in his appeal :—

"No, Regan, thou shalt never have my curse;
Thy tender-hefted nature shall not give
Thee o'er to harshness: her eyes are fierce, but thine
Do comfort and not burn".

(Act ii., sc. iv.)

But Regan's gentleness is more cruel than Goneril's violence. Who would not rather receive the blows of Goneril than the stiletto wounds of Regan; we are roused by an open quarrel, we writhe under cool contempt.

"Goneril: How have I offended?
All's not offence that indiscretion finds
And *dotage* terms so;

"Regan: I pray you, father, being *weak*, seem so.

For those that mingle reason with your passion
Must be content to think you *old*."

(Act ii., sc. iv.)

Regan is a parasite by nature, she clings to others, but to destroy them. She does not originate schemes of wickedness, as do Goneril and Edmund, but she makes each of them more wicked. If Goneril deals in reproachful words, Regan utters contemptuous ones. If Goneril cuts off half the train of knights, Regan cuts off all. And when the king goes out into the wild night Goneril says :—

"My lord, entreat him by no means to stay".

(Act ii., sc. iv.)

But it is Regan who adds :—

“Shut up your door”.

So she eggs on her husband to deeds of greater cruelty. If Cornwall proposes to put Kent in the stocks and says,—

“There shall he sit till noon,”

(Act ii., sc. iv.)

Regan exclaims,—

“Till noon ! till night, my lord ; and all night too”.

When Cornwall has thrust out one of Gloster’s eyes, Regan exclaims :—

“One side will mock another : the other too”.

(Act ii., sc. iv.)

And she stabs the servant who would have held Cornwall back. It is clear that she thrusts on Edmund to still darker deeds :—

“It was ignorance, Gloster’s eyes being out,
To let him live ; where he arrives he moves
All hearts against us ; Edmund, I think, is gone
In pity of his misery to despatch
His nighted life”.

Afraid of Goneril herself, she stirs up Edmund against her sister, and only at last when she has no more to fear, she stabs her.

Yet Goneril’s violence is not strength, but weakness, the result of fear. When first the quarrel begins with her father, she justifies herself to Albany by urging her fears. He does not know enough then to condemn her, but answers :—

“Well you may fear too far,
How far your eyes may pierce I cannot tell,
Striving to better, oft we mar what’s well”.

(Act i., sc. iv.)

Of the beauty of Cordelia’s character much has

been written, but each of us conceives a different picture. We learn to know her, as we do real people, not by reading a description, but by watching her in different circumstances, by adding one trait after another. We know that she is lovable, as we see her father look on her and say :—

“ Now, our joy,
Although the last, not least,”

and,

“ I lov'd her most ”.

(Act i., sc. i.)

France too reminds him that Cordelia had been

“ The argument of your praise, balm of your age ”.

It is one grievance of the sisters that “ he always loved our sister most ”. We see her shrink, as she stands beside the mannish Goneril, the treacherous Regan, and listens to their bold falsehood. The “ Nothing ” which provokes the king, is full of indignant sorrow, and when she knows she has angered him she cannot retract ; “ to mend her fortunes,” she cannot take a gift which is not the simple expression of her father's trust and love, nor buy it with false coin ; yet she does not defy him. Afterwards as he recalls that scene he tells us :—

“ Her voice was ever soft,
Gentle and low—an excellent thing in woman ”.

(Act v., sc. iii.)

She utters not one word of gratitude to France, yet we hear by her pleading tones,—

“ I yet beseech your majesty
(If for I want that glib and oily art,
To speak and purpose not ; since what I well intend,
I'll do't before I speak),
It is no vicious blot . . .
That hath deprived me of your grace's favour,”

(Act i., sc. i.)

and we know from her few words,—

“Peace be with Burgundy,
Since that respects of fortune are his love,
I shall not be his wife,”

how glad she is that poverty has saved her from him, and given her to one who can interpret music without words. We hear nothing of her life in France, yet we know when the French army comes that France is stirred by her to maintain the right, to succour the defenceless. We know by his departure that no selfish greed has prompted the invasion, but love to her.

We are sure that to her at least the fool is unjust, when he says :—

“There was never yet fair woman, but she made mouths in a glass”.
(Act iii., sc. ii.)

She never stands in admiring contemplation of her own virtues.

“*Cor.* : O thou good Kent, how shall I live and work,
To match thy goodness? My life will be too short
And every measure fail me.”

(Act iv., sc. vii.)

There is no violent utterance of grief and indignation. She does not curse her sisters, nor cast them out from her pity. Her passion is not like Lear's, a destructive whirlwind, dashing the frail vessel against the rocks, it is a steady breeze filling the sails, and moving on the soul in the path of love and duty.

“It seemed she was a queen over her passion; who, most rebel-like, sought to be king over her.”

(Act iv., sc. iv.)

“*Kent* : O, then it mov'd her.”

“*Gent.* : Not to a rage; patience and sorrow strove
Who should express her goodliest.”

We marvel at first at the mingled feeling :—

" Her smiles and tears
Were like a better May : those happy smiles,
That play'd on her ripe lip, seemed not to know
What guests were in her eyes ; "

(Act iv., sc. iii.)

until we remember that she must have felt how blessed
is sorrow, that

" There is a soul of goodness in things evil,
Would men observingly distil it out,"
" Sweet are the uses of adversity ".

Besides, her modest nature hinders her expressing
much :—

" What I well intend,
I'll do't before I speak".

(Act i., sc. i.)

This makes her shrink from display of grief :—

" There she shook
The holy water from her heavenly eyes,
And clamour moisten'd : then away she started
To deal with grief alone ".

(Act iv., sc. iv.)

I need not dwell on the beauty of that scene where she
wakens her father with a healing kiss. When he is
defeated she grieves not for herself, but for her father,
and turns at once to the hope that she may yet touch
her sisters' hearts :—

" We are not the first,
Who with best meaning have incurred the worst ;
For thee, oppressed King, I am cast down ;
Myself could else out-frown false Fortune's frown,—
Shall we not see these daughters, and these sisters ? "

And then follows that wonderful speech of the king,
which tells us that sorrow mingled with love has done
its work :—

" When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down
And ask of thee forgiveness ".

(Act v., sc. iii.)

Turning to the old king we find much to make us love him : his generosity, his sense of justice as shown in the division of his kingdom, his childlike trust, his sincerity, his affection for his daughters, his fidelity to his knights, and the fact that he had won the devoted love of Cordelia and of Kent. But he had missed the discipline of life, and so he was a child in character.

"They flattered me ; and told me there were white hairs in my head ere the black ones were there. To say ay and no to everything I said was no good divinity. When the thunder would not peace at my bidding, there I smelt them out."

"When I do stare see how the subject quakes."

Thus, when the weakness of old age came on, his childish faults appeared—rashness, wilfulness, obstinacy. Goneril says truly :—

"We must look from his age to receive not only the imperfections of his long engrafted condition, but therewithal the unruly waywardness that infirm and choleric years bring with them".

When he had become sensible of his first error, he might have appealed against Goneril to her husband. Three times Albany protested his innocence, and asked the cause of the king's wrath ; but Lear would not be interrupted in his cursing, and finally rushed out, leaving Albany to Goneril's misrepresentations.

At first, as we listen to Lear's curses, we think adversity has made him harder and more wicked. But already there are signs of softening, when he tries to believe Regan is really ill :—

"I'll forbear ;

And am fallen out with my more headier will".

And if he breaks out once more into curses against Goneril, he checks himself :—

"I do not bid the thunder-bearer shoot,
Nor tell tales of thee to high-judging Jove :
Mend when thou canst, be better at thy leisure :
I can be patient".

“ Is this well spoken ? ”

“ I can be patient ”.

"Lear: **Wilt break my heart?**

“ I’ll pray, and then I’ll sleep.

As long as he gloats over the thought of vengeance, so long healing is impossible. His madness must grow, and the justice for which he cries must have been his curse :—

"To have a thousand with red burning spits come hissing in upon them". (Act iii., sc. vi.)

If he retained a sort of faith in the gods, his faith in men was gone. All were "sophisticated" (act iii., sc. iv.). There was wickedness concealed under every show of virtue (act iv., sc. vi.). He has no power then to save himself; some holy and loving spirit must descend into the pit of misery, with the power of redeeming love, and bring forth the sinful, suffering soul. Then, even by the last reverse, he is not thrown into "ill thoughts again". He is able to bear all patiently; to believe that there is a mystery in God's dealings, which it will take a lifetime to understand. We see how changed he is when he dwells, not on the sins of others, but his own; he is no longer a man "more sinned against than sinning".

"Come, let's away to prison;
We two alone will sit like birds i' the cage;
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down
And ask of thee forgiveness: so we'll live
And take upon us the mystery of things
As if we were God's spies."

And at last he dies for love of her, who had so loved him.

As Cordelia is the guardian angel of Lear, so is Edgar of Gloster. How striking is the contrast between the two sufferers as they meet each other on that desolate heath; Lear had been ever fierce of tongue, violent to his opposers, but Edgar was able to reply to the suggestions of Edmund:—

"Have you not spoken against the Duke of Cornwall?
Have you nothing said
Upon his party 'gainst the Duke of Albany?
"Edgar: I am sure on't, not a word."

(Act ii., sc. i.)

And Edmund says of him :—

“ A brother noble,
Whose nature is so far from doing harms,
That he suspects none ”.

(Act i., sc. iii.)

Not one word of anger escapes Edgar when, driven out, he puts on the disguise of a beggar and a mad-man. He is not maddened as Lear, because, turning from his own griefs, he pours forth his compassion on others :—

“ When we our betters see bearing our woes,
We scarcely think our miseries our foes,—
Who alone suffers, suffers most.
But then the mind much sufferance doth o’erskip,
When grief hath mates, and bearing fellowship.

(Act iii., sc. vi.)

And though

“ The lowest and most dejected thing of fortune,”

he

“ Stands still in esperance, lives not in fear ”.

(Act iv., sc. ii.)

It is clear that faith is the companion grace of this hope and charity ; when others talk of fate ruling our destiny, and Edmund tries to persuade Edgar of what he does not himself believe, that

“ These late eclipses in the Sun and Moon portend no good to us ; love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide ; the bond cracked ’twixt son and father,”

(Act i., sc. ii.)

Edgar only replies with indifference :—

“ How long have you been a sectary astronomical ? ”

(Act i., sc. ii.)

When Gloster has suffered his cruel punishment, has learned that he too has driven forth the innocent, and become the victim of his wicked son ; when poor, blind, and miserable, he finds his way to the scene of

the king's suffering, when his agony wrests from him the cry :—

“ As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods :
They kill us for their sport,”

(Act iv., sc. i.)

then Edgar's whole soul is turned to the blessed work, the healing of the wounded spirit. He who had once been tempted to suicide (act iii., sc. iv.) has made it his “ study how to prevent the fiend,” and now he administers the treaculum, the virtues of which he must himself have proved :—

“ O you mighty gods ! [cries Gloster,]
This world I do renounce ; and, in your sights,
Shake patiently my great affliction off :
If I could bear it longer, and not fall
To quarrel with your great opposeless wills,
My snuff, and loathèd part of nature should
Burn itself out ”.

(Act iv., sc. vi.)

Gloster is bent on tempting the gods, and casting himself down headlong, but Edgar will be the angel to bear him up ; with truthful guile he has led his father towards the perilous cliff, but not to its verge, and now by his fable of the horned monster he teaches the truth, that it was an evil spirit that would have led him to destruction, but

“ That the dearest gods, who make them honours
Of men's impossibilities, they have preserved thee ”.

They had indeed led him to Edgar, and so he is saved, and he adds :—

“ Henceforth I'll bear
Affliction, until it do cry out itself,
' Enough, enough, ' and die ”.

(Act. iv., sc. vi.)

He has learned that “ heaven's plagues can humble,”

and we feel sure he who had once made a mock at sin admits the truth of Edgar's later words to Edmund :—

“The Gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
Make instruments to scourge us,”

(Act v. sc. iii.)

and feeling that the gods are just, he can bear to live.

In the noble Albany we see loyalty tested to the utmost. At first he is willing to believe his wife has some cause for the quarrel with her father, though he blames her :—

“I cannot be so partial, Goneril,
To the great love I bear you”.

Later he sees all, then his trust is gone ; a disobedient daughter can never be trusted by her husband :—

“That nature, which contemns its origin,
Cannot be border'd certain in itself ;
She that herself will sliver, and disbranch
From her material sap, perforce will wither,
And come to deadly use”.

(Act iv., sc. ii.)

But she is his wife, and a woman, it is not for him to take vengeance :—

“Were 't my fitness
To let these hands obey my blood,
They are apt enough to dislocate, and tear
Thy flesh and bones :—howe'er thou art a fiend,
A woman's shape doth shield thee”.

He can only appeal to heaven against her :—

“If that the heavens do not their visible spirits
Send quickly down to tame these vile offences,
It will come”.

And when at last her whole wickedness is revealed, his prayer is answered. He is spared the terrible burden of executing judgment, and she falls a victim to her wicked sister !

Coleridge says: "Kent is perhaps the nearest approach to perfect goodness in all Shakespeare's characters, and the most individualised". His loyal love stands in bright contrast to Lear's selfishness. He asks only to love, not to be loved. His conscience is ever clear, his loyalty unwavering, his trust in Cordelia absolute. See him sitting in the stocks, thinking the moon comes out in order that he may be comforted by the dear letter of Cordelia, and falling asleep as he reads it, like a tired child. He is faithful not to death, but beyond ; and when Lear passes away, he sinks too :—

"I have a journey, too, shortly to go ;
My master calls me ; I must not say no".

Kent is contrasted with Oswald :—

"No contraries hold more antipathies
Than I and such a knave".

Yet there is in Oswald a consistent mercenary loyalty towards his employer. As Edgar says :—

"I know thee well : a serviceable villain,
As duteous to the vices of thy mistress
As badness would desire".

(Act iv., sc. vi.)

Kent calls him "a superserviceable slave," "a dog" to follow those who feed him ; and the fool describes him as a "Sir who serves and seeks for gain". Such loyalty is utterly opposed, however, to that of Kent, who in disguise

Followed his enemy king, and did him service
Improper for a slave".

Externally, too, how different is he from the true gentleman. Do we not see the dandy conscious of his clothes, as the earl in fustian looks him down and says, "A tailor made thee". Kent is not ashamed of

poverty, but he knows what will provoke a flunkey when he calls Oswald a "three-suited, hundred-pound, worsted-stocking knave". See the vulgarity of Oswald's manners, bowing, smiling, or grimacing whenever he speaks. He is clearly one of Cornwall's "twenty ducking observants". He tries to look contemptuous, but is really terrified at Kent :—

"Such smiling rogues,"

says Kent,

"A plague upon your epileptic visage!
Smile you my speeches, as I were a fool!"

It is he who has fanned into a flame the anger of Goneril.

"*Gon.* : Did my father strike my gentleman for chiding of his fool?"

"*Oswald* : Ay, madam."

(Act i., sc. iii.)

And then he goes from her to provoke the king, and to carry her cruel letters to Regan. Kent knew all this, hence his violent words, that he might make the coward fight. Hence his indignant protest :—

"Such rogues,
Like rats, oft bite the holy cords atwain
Which are too intrinse t' unloose! smooth every passion
That in the natures of their lords rebels;
Bring oil to fire, snow to their colder moods;
Renague, affirm, and turn their halcyon beaks
With every gale and vary of their masters,
Knowing nought, like dogs, but following".

(Act ii., sc. ii.)

Oswald it was who informed against Gloster, and for gain sought to kill the blind old man. Yet base as he was, he was throughout "duteous to his mistress". Regan could extract nothing from him, and his last thought was for the safe delivery of Goneril's letter.

Of Edmund we need say but few words, he is a

more ordinary villain, a cross between Iago and Richard III., and a Mephistopheles in his cold wickedness. Yet even him we may pity, when we remember he was an outcast and a homeless exile for nine long years. Some little hint we have of what he might have been had he lived amongst good men :—

“ This speech of yours hath mov'd me,
And shall perchance do good,”

(Act v., sc. iii.)

what he might have become, if a pure and holy love could have been his, when the thought that any one, even those wicked sisters, cared for him, made him wish to be better.

“ Yet Edmund was beloved :
The one the other poison'd for my sake
And after slew herself ”.
“ I pant for life : some good I mean to do,
Despite of mine own nature.”

(Act v., sc. iii.)

Much remains to say of the simple devotion of the poor fool, much of the general aspect of the time, but this has been treated more fully by Ulrici and Gervinus. The play has supplied many saws with which we are familiar—best known of all :—

“ A dog's obeyed in office.”

and

“ Truth's a dog must to kennel ”.
“ Speak less than thou knowest.”
“ Fortune ne'er turns the key to the poor.”
“ We'll set thee to school to an ant, to teach thee.
There's no labouring in the winter.”

“ Let go thy hold, when a great wheel runs down a hill, but the great one that goes upward, let him draw thee after.”

“ He that hath and a little thing wit
Must make content with his fortunes fit.”
“ Striving to better, oft we mar what's well.”

On the Theology of Paradise Lost.

ON DIFFERENT THEOLOGICAL CONCEPTIONS OF SEVENTEENTH CENTURY AND OUR OWN DAY EMBODIED IN THE FORM OF IMAGINARY CONVERSATIONS.

NINETEENTH century to seventeenth.

19th : The world believes that monotheism has long been the faith at least of Europe—but surely there are still many gods that are worshipped. What, *e.g.*, is your own conception as set forth in your great poem which we still read and admire for its grandeur, and which some regard as Bible truth? Your teaching regarding God and the devil seems to me abominable, and quite opposed to the teaching of Christ. Now what do you understand by God?

17th : A Being, Almighty, All-wise, All-good.

19th : But what is your definition of good?

17th : One is good who is a just ruler.

19th : What is your idea of just rule?

17th : The establishment of perfect order. Kosmos as opposed to chaos.

19th : This would be my idea of goodness in a machine, and in the material universe regarded as such—but granted the possibility of any being besides God, *i.e.*, an intellectual and moral *vera causa*, with a limited perception of truth, and a limited power of love, he must be capable of thinking and willing other than God ; if the fundamental doctrine of Puritanism is right, that we are to submit to no external authority, his duty will in that case surely be to do what seems to him the

right, even though it be different from what God has pronounced to be right.

17th : Then if he does, God knowing that creature is wrong, if he cannot get him to understand, or trust, or submit, is bound to use his Almighty power to save the universe.

19th : Your conception of God seems to me wholly evil—it is the worship then of mere force, not of goodness. What title has God to force Lucifer to do homage? If he and others believe himself to be a worthier vicegerent than the Christ, surely they were right to protest, and a ruler who could treat the angel hosts as they were treated, because in their judgment the supreme force was wrong, is in my eyes worse than the devil. To call the God of Milton Love, is to call black white.

17th : I believe the outrageously wicked teaching of which I hear so much now is due to your false conception of goodness. Why, a good Being must, as far as he is able, bring about good. I hear it is the fashion in your world now to hate authority and power merely as such. If another is abler or richer, especially if another is a ruler, that is enough, he is to be blown up with dynamite ; the poor Czar was not killed because he had done any wrong, but because he was Czar—landlords are stabbed because they are landlords—*à bas les aristocrats*, we will have our rights—to smash and destroy goods honestly gained, to hinder peaceable people from doing what they wish. Why in my day people's hair stood up, when they heard of gunpowder plot ; now Guy forsooth must no longer be burnt ; and Cabinet ministers make alliances with the Guys of to-day. My idea of the devil is an arch-rebel, he hates all authority and power, and under his rule chaos would return, his character I see in those

unreasoning haters who gnash their teeth, and ball their fists directly they feel the touch of one stronger than themselves, though that stronger man is only putting forth his strength for their good. Look at the Thénardiens of the world—tender dealing towards such only aggravates their wickedness; if they hate force they at least respect it. Is force then evil and its exercise in restraining evil inconsistent with love? Add to Infinite Wisdom and Infinite Power, Infinite Love, *i.e.*, the will to bring about universal harmony, and suppose one opposing will—one who would introduce chaos—surely then the exercise of force to enforce agreement with the universal good is necessary to our idea of goodness. Not to exercise such force would be to connive at evil.

19th: Surely you would not consider that God had brought about good by crushing down resistance—this may bring about a Roman peace but not a Divine peace, *i.e.*, conformity of will with His good-will. One who crushes down all who oppose His will is a tyrant, not the good Being, not Love, not the God revealed in the Christ of the New Testament.

17th: I think it is required of a Being who combines the three attributes, wisdom—power—goodness, this is necessary to my idea of God, that, failing to convince the creature and failing to win his trust, He must, unless He can destroy, compel obedience for the universal good; to do otherwise would be to act like a weak and therefore a wicked king—to let anarchy invade the universe, because he will not take the trouble to put forth the power which would prevent it. His goodness compels him to use Almighty force, to at least chain up the would-be criminal.

19th: Truly your doctrine is one with that of the Holy Office. You Puritans are descendants of

them that killed the prophets, though you build their sepulchres. Your God is merciful as a Torquemada. "Agree with me—or if you can't, act as if you did. I don't want to hurt you, but believe differently from me, or act as I tell you not, and I am very sorry but you will then come out of the court of Love, and come under the guardianship of Force." Wherein does your God differ from a Zeus, who sent Force to hammer in the rivets which bound to the cruel rock the Titan whose only fault was that he loved mankind? But you do not even represent God as keeping down Satan to protect the Universe, but simply as malicious. Listen to this—book i., lines 209-15 :—

"So stretched out huge in length the arch-fiend lay
Chained on the burning lake; nor ever thence
Had risen, or heaved his head, but that the will
And high permission of all ruling Heaven
Left him at large to his own dark designs;
That reiterated crimes he might
Heap on himself damnation, while he sought
Evil to others;"

17th: No! your reproach is unjust. I don't say we have a right to use force, to compel people to submit to our opinions—because we have no guarantee that we are right—we are not all-wise, neither have we any sovereign or paternal rights towards one another—to assume to act as inquisitors (or for that matter Puritans) often did would be to claim to ascend the throne of God. Zeus treated Prometheus cruelly in his own selfish interests,—to keep his throne, whereas the all-wise and all-good acts in the interests of His creatures, who would suffer if one who was neither undertook the government of the Universe.

19th: Might not Zeus urge that it was his duty to hold his seat and to save the Universe from lawless Titanism?—and surely if we believe that God is

the alone and eternal source of all being, the existence in any creature of a will opposed to His must make His wisdom or goodness doubtful—whence came that opposing will?

17th: None have claimed for creatures perfection. Evil is a possibility involved in the existence of two beings. Given one inferior, and derived, and finite, there can be harmony only when there is willing dependence arising from the knowledge and acceptance of its true relations to God.

19th: Grant that there are two opposing wills—one of which is the will of the all-wise and all-good and almighty, the matter I want you to treat not in reference to man, but in conformity with your theory of the devil.

17th: You deny eternal punishment—but if the essence of a Being is that he is a *vera causa*, and if men and angels are beings I cannot see that there can fail to be war in heaven (Rev. xii. 7). Nor can I see that you have any right to maintain that the opposition must necessarily cease—the power which originated must *a fortiori* be able to sustain it—and if so then to prevent anarchy the supreme must keep the other in chains. I can see no other solution.

19th: Still I hold your solution to be that of Inquisitors and Puritans opposed to the teaching of Jesus Christ. He says God is love, so then Love alone is almighty, force cannot subdue, it is a temporary expedient to give the imperfect creature time to learn, without letting him at the same time destroy the Kosmos; the blind creature rises against force, as force, because he knows not there is love directing it. This spirit of hatred to authority as authority, proceeds from the desire not for the general good, but for the assertion of self. I admit that pride is

the first of the deadly sins, but Christ teaches that the victory is to be gained, not by God's vicegerent coercing, but being coerced. He who mediates as Son of God and Son of Man conquers at last in the eternal world and becomes true King, not by trampling down and wounding, but by being trampled on and wounded. Thus by revealing God's love He conquers His foes, leads captivity captive, harrows hell; thus only can He subdue spiritual beings—to shut up such in a prison, to render them powerless by suffering is not to be their King. Enduring contradiction against Himself is the alone means of revealing His love, both to man and to the Principalities (not only to the good but to the evil who knew not), and thus reconciling to Himself all things in heaven and earth. This is the atonement.

17th: I admit the truth of what you say, but I think you do not do justice to us. You do not think Bunyan meant us to believe Christian took a real journey away from a particular town. Why do you suppose Milton meant that Satan was thrown out of a special place in this which we call space? You do not think that the Red Cross Knight was believed by Spenser, or Christian by Bunyan, to have been immured in a dark dungeon, and thence to have emerged pale and emaciated—you think that his soul was for a while in outer darkness, you think that shame and penitence had so brought down the spirit of him who had trodden the palace of pride, and turned from the paths of true honour, that his soul was "as a weaned child," he was so feeble spiritually that he could not longer feel "I can," but saw himself unable, and truly was unable, to fight, until by obedient discipline and by heavenly communion he had been restored to moral health and strength in the house of Coelia, *i.e.*, by living

in the thought of, in the presence of, the eternal realities; by seeking to know the truth, by living up to the truth known. So Christian is not starved by a material giant, but by awful overmastering despair. And you do not suppose that Spenser thought of Orgoglio or Bunyan of Giant Despair as actual monsters, but poetically he represented Pride and Despair as strong and gigantic.

So surely Milton spoke of his own experience, when he said that Pride which looks so grand, so heavenly, does indeed bear witness that we were made for the highest, but that the nobler the being, the more terrible will be his sufferings, if he tries to break the laws which bind him to loyal obedience; then he sees only darkness and confusion, instead of light and obedience and order. He who believes not in God's goodness must become an anarchist, a nihilist; he will try to gratify his soul with hatred and revenge. Can we do otherwise than speak a mythological language, when we would describe a soul darkened, its glory eclipsed—the once radiant countenance "entrenched" with lines which tell of the darkness within?

COMMENTS BY THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.—Remember the Seventeenth Century had a most difficult task—it had to change its cosmic conceptions, on which so much of the poetry of religion depends. It had not learned from the teachers of science to think of powers, without some mythological conception. It seems to me impossible that Milton, whose earnest aspiration was to help us to understand and know better that God's ways were just and holy, to "justify the ways of God to man" should have ended by degrading our conception of God, and through them our ideas. I think the evil of the time made him forsake the sanctuary,

where he could alone hear and interpret the music of heaven—and so this was confused and marred by the din of earth ; but in later times, when those controversies and “little systems” which come between men’s eyes and the spiritual sun have passed away, we shall see more clearly through the teaching of Milton’s poem, those great spiritual truths which are a possession for all time, but which for most of us need “to be embodied in a tale” —that we shall be helped by him to realise more vividly that which our own hearts tell us, that the selfish man who casts out a belief in love and goodness, suffers a torture more terrible than we can conceive, that he excludes himself from the vision of God, from the communion with the blessed, from peace and joy, that he will drag down others into chaos and darkness. This story of the fall from heaven is a lurid hieroglyphic writing of the necessary inevitable suffering, the utter darkness and misery of the soul that knows not the love of God.

The Religious Teaching of Browning.

THERE are those who judge others, as the world does, by their faults and failures, who seem to think that in these the true character comes out ; and there are those who, knowing that they have within themselves a high ideal, which they fail to attain, believe that the true character comes out in the best that we know of any one.

“What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me.”

So they judge a thinker by his noblest works : Wordsworth by his *Ode to Duty* rather than by *The Idiot Boy* ; Milton by his *Areopagitica* rather than his *Divorce* tracts. Thus we love Browning for his great thoughts, his high enthusiasm, for his faith in God and man and woman. We come to him for his philosophy, and we care not to dwell upon the shortcomings, upon the superficial faults, which every one can see ; rather would we bring to light the hidden treasures. We thank him for the comfort and strength he has given us. We know that he has enriched our sympathies, cheered us under failure and disappointment, and helped us to understand the meaning of life. But I think what draws most of us to him is this : we are struggling with the waves of doubt—storm-tost and ready to sink—and as we look at him, we see him with a smile on his face, calmly floating, his head above the waves, his body supported therein. He quietly tells us our safety is to do the same. He teaches that to bury ourselves

in the things of earth is death ;¹ to try to rise out of the conditions in which God has placed us may end in a Soul's Tragedy ; to make use of the things of time to sustain us as we look upward, this is our wisdom during our life here, ere the disembodied Psyche can soar into more ethereal regions, and revel in the sunlight ; and so he conciliates philosophy and religion.

The lovers of Browning's poetry wonder that any one can ask the question, Is he a religious poet ? True, he has not written religious epics as Dante and Milton, and there are but few poems which are definitely on religious subjects, but the unseen is ever present to him. He is ever seeking to interpret the seen by the unseen, to justify the ways of God to man. He is ever conscious of the double life, of a Divine presence.

"The spiritual life around the earthly life :
Which runs across some vast distracting orb
Of glory on either side that meagre thread."

(*An Epistle.*)

"God glows above
With scarce an intervention ; presses close
And palpitatingly His soul o'er ours !
We feel Him, nor by painful reason know."

(*Luria.*)

So we are never shut in by the visible universe ; it is to us the veil, the sacrament of the invisible, the infinite, the *καλόν καγαθόν*. Yet is the Infinite no mere pantheistic presence, but the Father of spirits, manifested first and pre-eminently in the soul of man, His child, who, because he *is* a son, is heir of all things. Thus does the Christian teaching penetrate all his thoughts.

Yet to the religious consciousness of some, Browning does not speak. There are child-like souls who have

¹ See *Fifine*.

ever looked up to God in simple loving faith, over whose being the storms of doubt have never swept, who have not known what it is to sit in the midst of a thick darkness, a darkness that may be felt ; an unquestioning faith is theirs, and they have never had to wrestle with the problems of life. To such, Browning may appear non-religious, yes, even irreligious, as did Job to his friends, because he cannot receive truth from the outside ; it must be looked at from his deepest consciousness, an external revelation is not enough ; it is not put in the forefront, because to him it is the outcome, the completion of that which is known by the intuitions of the soul ; for though we may believe a person, we cannot believe in a person because some one tells us he did wonderful works—we must be united by inward sympathies,

“Whereby truth, deadened of its absolute blaze,
Might need love’s eye to pierce the o’erstretched doubt”.
(*Death in the Desert.*)

We know the Divine through the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit ; in other words, the kingdom of heaven is within.

Thus Browning seems to me a prophet whom God has given to our storm-tost age, a pilot who has learnt by long experience the hidden rocks and sandbanks on which the vessel of faith may be wrecked, now that the old anchor chains are burst asunder. An infallible Church, an infallible Book, an infallible Pope, all these have failed us—failed us that, rejecting the stones of the desert, we may learn that man does not live by bread alone, but by the word of God doth man live. I will take a few typical poems familiar to most of us, to establish my position :—

His idea of what a *poet* is called to be is given in his picture of a Contemporary :—

"I only knew one poet in my life,
And this or something like it was his way".

And then we read of one who walked about in the
haunts of men :—

"Scenting the world, looking it full in the face,
Trying the mortar's temper 'tween the chinks".

Watching common sights and common people, and
seeing, not the outside shows, but the real thing be-
hind, and thus awakening the conscience, and exercising
a kingship by right Divine. Judging not according to
the appearance, but righteous judgment.

"My father, like the man of sense he was,
Would point him out to me a dozen times.
'St, st,' he'd whisper, 'the Corregidor.'"

"If any beat a horse, you felt he saw ;
If any cursed a woman, he took note,
Yet stared at nobody—you stared at him,
And found, less to your pleasure than surprise,
He seemed to know you, and expect as much."

(How it Strikes a Contemporary.)

His reward was to know he was

"Doing the king's work all the dim day long,"

though the tongue of scandal was busy with his life,—
a life which the low and sensual cannot believe in.
Though no audible voice spoke to the poet, though no
vision of glory appeared, yet he *knew*, he *felt* the king's
approval.

"But never word or sign that I could hear
Notified to this man about the street
The king's approval of those letters.

• • • • •
Was some such understanding 'twixt the two?"

"Hereby we know that we know Him, because we
love Him and keep His commandments."

At last we see him dying on

“The neat low truckle bed”;
 alone, as far as man could see, but waited on by unseen hosts.

The consciousness of the priesthood of the true poet breathes through the whole of *Sordello*; his sin was that he was unfaithful almost unto the end to the spirit within him, that he was content to enjoy, to receive, when he was heir to the kingship over humanity, the crown of which is a crown of thorns. His claim to the throne had to be made good by the power of self-sacrifice, by dying to self, that he might find a larger life in those for whom he lived, and this at last redeems the erring one. What grander picture can be drawn of a poet than that of the ideal *Sordello* :—

“The complete *Sordello*, Man and Bard,
 John’s cloud-girt angel, this foot on the land,
 That on the sea, with, open in his hand,
 A bitter-sweetling of a book”.

In the consciousness of an unseen presence then, in the faith that there is a reality behind the shows of earth, a meaning in this wondrous kosmos, and that each lives and dies nobly who faces the sphinx and gives an answer to the riddle of life; in the faith that though here we know *in part*, we shall one day truly know, Browning addresses himself to his task.

And what is it which calls out first in us the sense of poetry? Ask the great poets of the world. It is the sight of suffering. The real must be unsatisfying ere we seek for the ideal. The great epics and dramas have all been tragic; each has his own vision of Prometheus, agonising humanity. If there is one poem into which Browning has thrown all his artistic power, I think it is *Saul*. How grand is the stage on which we see the suffering Titan! the black tent in the midst of the sand “burnt to powder”; the blinding

glare without, darkness within. There he endures in the desert, through which flow no refreshing streams to quench the thirst of his soul; he who once had "heard the words of God, had seen the vision of the Almighty," is now blinded by the glory, and he knows not the love which his own heart has cast out. There he hangs, upon his cross.

"He stood, as erect as the tent-prop, both arms stretched out wide,
On the great cross-support in the centre that goes to each side.
He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there, as caught in his pangs,
And waiting his chance, the king-serpent all heavily hangs
Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance come
With the spring-time;—so agonised Saul, drear and stark, blind and
dumb."

To him, doubly shut out from the light of heaven, comes youth and beauty and innocence personified in David. He comes like a ministering angel, the dew of heaven in his "gracious gold hair," with bright lilies telling of life and hope—

"Just broken to twine round thy harp-strings, as if no wild heat
Were now raging to torture the desert".

Then he sings the simple songs of the shepherd lad, the beauty and peace of nature, the felt harmony and love in all things.

"God made all the creatures, and gave them our love and our fear,
To give sign we and they are His children, one family here."

Next he passes on to the tale of human joys and sorrows; but there is no response till he comes to that which gives the meaning to man's life, the consciousness of a glory beyond.

"Then here in the darkness Saul groaned,
And I paused, held my breath in such silence, and listened apart;
And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered, and sparkles 'gan
dart

From the jewels that woke in his turban at once with a start
All its lordly male-sapphires and rubies, courageous at heart ;
So the head ; but the body still moved not, still hung there erect."

He tries another theme. He tells of the joyous sense of life and vigour, once felt by the warrior king ; bids him follow again the story of the past, and thence believe in the love of God.

"Let one more attest
I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a lifetime, and all was for best."

Then he shows him in the lives of others the ennobling of the soul through suffering.

"Such result as, from seething grape bundles, the spirit-strained true."

From the vantage-ground of the past he would have him contemplate the present suffering ; through sorrow he had been crowned.

"Then Saul, who hung propped
By the tent's cross-support in the centre, was struck by his name.
One long shudder thrilled
All the tent till the very air tingled, then sank, and was stilled
At the king's self, left standing before me, released and aware."

But this only awakens the king to consciousness, it cannot restore him. Can he live by the thought that his life may enter into the being of humanity, that though he perish he may pour out palm wine¹ for the life of posterity ; can he be sustained by the enthusiasm of humanity ? No ! the wretched despise themselves ; only in the consciousness of a life and love, sustaining, fulfilling them, can they hope to bless others. They must be conscious of a love, not small enough for them to possess, but large enough to possess them ; of an ocean in which they and all may be baptised, of a boundless love in which we may all live and move ; a spiritual presence, which, brooding over the dead soul, awakens it to a responsive life. And it is upon the

revelation of the Divine love first revealed within the soul that our poet rests the salvation of humanity. The love which David feels kindling, glowing, burning in himself towards this sufferer, what is it but the Spirit bearing witness with his spirit to the deeper depths of the Divine love?

"Shall the creature surpass the Creator,—the end, what began?
Would I fain, in my impotent yearning, do all for this man,
And dare doubt, He alone shall not do it, Who yet alone can."

As man's love yearns to utter itself, though it cannot, so must the Divine love. Man cannot utter through the feeble body, in the bonds of time, the infinite love which he yet feels within, but the Infinite, the Eternal, God is uttering it in all creation, in every soul of man who feels and responds to the music of heaven. This it is which restores life to the dying soul, whilst to the prophet the Divine incarnation becomes a fact realised in the inner consciousness; it is a truth antecedent to and resting upon a deeper foundation than any external evidence, it is a truth in Plato's sense; it is a Divine, an eternal idea, which *must* be realised in time, be one day revealed to redeem the world. So he passes on from the *must be* to the *shall be*; this was the argument of the risen Lord, ἔδει παθεῖν τὸν χριστόν.

"Then the truth came upon me. No harp more—no song more!
outbroke

I believe it! 'Tis Thou, God, that givest, 'tis I who receive.

Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst thou—so wilt
thou!

So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown,
And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down
One spot for the creature to stand in!

He who did most shall bear most ; the strongest shall stand the most weak,

'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for ! my flesh that I seek
In the Godhead ! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be—
A Face like my face that receives thee : a Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever : a Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee ! See the Christ
stand."

And in the consciousness of this Divine presence, the Divine love comes in like a flood upon his soul, it overflows into creation, all vibrates to the music of heaven, and trembles in the glow of its surpassing glory ; the earth is transformed, there seems no longer an inanimate, for the life of God Himself breathes through all.

" And the stars of night beat with emotion and tingled and shot
Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge : but I fainted not,
For the hand still upheld me at once and supported, suppressed
All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet and holy behest,
Till the rapture was shut in itself and the earth sank to rest."

And as we read we feel the poet has given us a higher idea of inspiration ; no outside voice is heard now ; the revelation is not by the voice of nature through sense and understanding, but through the heart ; the love of God possesses the soul, the heart of God is felt beating with the heart of man ; it is a moral revelation. In the depths of man's being is felt the quickening spirit, the true enthusiasm, and he rises to a new life ; there is the revelation to the human consciousness of the Divine in man,—the central truth of Christianity.

But the pessimist may turn to the reverse ; it may be said, if the intuitions of the noble tell of self-sacrifice and love, what about the degraded creeds that men have held ? are not these all the outcome, the utterances of humanity too, though on a lower plane ? Mr.

Browning has not shrunk from facing this question. As in the poem of *Saul* we have intuitions which enable us to grasp Divine truth, in *Caliban* we have a teaching from the text: "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself". He refuses to recognise as man, one without moral consciousness. He does not believe that there is any such monster born of woman, or, if such lives, he has descended from the human to the animal kingdom, by starving or poisoning the spirit. His creed, derived from the experience of his own wickedness, needs but to be expressed to be rejected. Caliban is a monster, for *he* is not a man who has no aspirations, who is content to lie and kick in the mud, who is a slave of impulse. His god, Setebos, is only a monstrous Caliban.

In these two poems I think Browning has sought to illustrate the deep truth that according to our moral standard are we able to receive Divine light and truth into our being. Let him not, however, be misunderstood. It is not historical propositions about Divine truth with which he is dealing—these, as St. James says, devils may believe—but the faith which lifts us out of the region of the phenomenal and transitory and imperfect into the real, the eternal, the inwardly true.

But it may be said, if God be indeed love, if man's utmost joy is to enter into the full recognition of that love (which is eternal life), why are we left to grope our way in the dim light? why does God not open for us the portals of the grave, let us look beyond, and then, with light and truth in our minds, return to lead our life here.

Bearing in mind the neo-platonic psychology which underlies Browning's thought, and is fully expressed in the *Death in the Desert*, we may say that as in *Saul*

we have the truly human, the man in whom the soul predominates, and in *Caliban* the bestial type, so in the *Epistle of Karshish* we have the spiritual, the supernatural man, and his theology.

The scene of the drama is a land desolated by war, dangerous from robbers and beasts of prey, barren and dreary, as it seems; yet in it are content to journey, or to live, two men—one to whom the soul's life perishes with the body, who therefore spends his time in studying how best

"To coop up and keep down on earth a space
That puff of vapour from God's mouth, man's soul";

the other to whom this life is but a shadow of the true.

We have in *Lazarus* the study of a soul that has seen things as they are, whose life has therefore passed out of the sphere of the phenomenal into that of the real. He has seen the "consuming fire" of the Divine glory, and "the elements have melted with fervent heat". Sensitive only to that transcendent light, the things of earth seem but as shadows, and the path of life a

"meagre thread
Which runs across some vast, distracting orb
Of glory".

Faith has passed into sight, and the human will is effaced in the Divine.

"Indeed the special marking of the man,
Is prone submission to the heavenly will—
Seeing it, what it is, and why it is."

But therefore is the moral discipline of life over for him; he can will only God's will. But in the order of God's education it is necessary we should walk first by faith, afterwards by sight; should work out the moral law ere we recognise it as Divine, else we could

not know God as good, and there could be no personal life, only the absorption of the human will in the infinite. Virtue can take root only in the darkness ; we need to live in a world opaque for us. If, whilst enduring the agony, we could see the joy set before us, how could our spiritual nature attain its full growth ! No ; we must utter the cry " Lama sabachthani " ere we can say, " It is finished ". " Clouds and darkness must be round about Him," that we may learn that " righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His seat ". We must do right not only because we know God wills it, but we must know that God wills it because it is right. We are to yield not " a prone submission," a satisfied assent, but the gladness of a full consent. There may be submission to the Almighty, but there can be concord only with the All-good.

And it seems that Lazarus has lost his characteristic as a man, because for him the work of this life is over ; he has anticipated the next stage of existence ere he has entered on it, and so there is discord.

" The law of that is known to him as this,
His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here,
So is the man perplex.

· · · · ·
' It should be ' baulked by ' here it cannot be '."

This life, too, has lost with its educative power its interest ; for to enjoy, we must ever be seeking the unattained, ever advancing.

" He listened not, except I spoke to him,
But folded his two hands, and let them talk,
Watching the flies that buzzed.

· · · · ·
Sayeth he will wait patiently to the last
For that same death, which must restore his being
To equilibrium, body loosening soul,
Divorced even now by premature full growth."

And he is no longer able to help others. We must *feel* their difficulties ere we can meet them ; there must be a measure of stupidity in us ; one may be too clever to be a teacher. So Lazarus seems as incapable of unfolding spiritual realities, as we of explaining sight to the blind.

“ How can he give his neighbour the real ground,
His own conviction.”

“ Hence I perceive not he affects to preach
The doctrine of his sect.”

In conclusion the poet leads us to feel that we must learn by degrees to use the heavenly treasure, not demand our inheritance ere we have attained our majority ; that the all-sufficient gospel is this—to know that the heart of God beats in sympathy with the heart of man.

“ So the All-great were the All-loving too—
So, through the thunder comes a human voice,
Saying, ‘ O heart I made, a heart beats here !
Face My hands fashioned, see it in Myself !
Thou hast no power, nor may’st conceive of Mine :
But love I gave thee, with Myself to love,
And thou must love Me who have died for thee ! ’ ”

We have said that Browning deals especially with the problems which force themselves most upon our age, and answers them as a poet, by appealing to our deepest consciousness, to our sense of what must be, to our moral intuitions. Perhaps in none are we made more conscious of his deep spiritual sympathies than in the companion poems, *Easter Day* and *Christmas Eve*. Browning knows people better than they know themselves. Which of us has not at some time professed to hold a creed, and thought perhaps we did believe what in the depths of our hearts we abhorred ? So he faces the superficial thinker, and makes him know

himself. Does the agnostic approach with a smiling countenance, saying, "I am content with this world's beauty, with science and art and law": Browning leads him to an earthly paradise, where no voice of God is heard among the trees of the garden: he casts at his feet all the gifts of beauty, but they are gifts from no one; he places him in a tabernacle vast and glorious, and it becomes to him a prison house, because there is no escape from it into a larger life: and as for human love, this too dies in the desert, it has no root, it is cut off from all that can feed its life; and at last the soul is made to feel the utter desolation of a life without God, to know what is eternal death, to understand that deepest utterance of man's heart, "This is life eternal, to know Thee"; to feel that the real *ἀναστασις*, ascent for man, is this—to come into full consciousness of union with God. Without it we pine and die amidst all the earth has to give; but if we know it, streams water the desert, which then rejoices and blossoms as the rose; the mountains and hills break forth into singing, and everything that hath breath praises God.

And *Christmas Eve* is complementary to *Easter Day*. That has dealt most with the relation of the individual soul to the source of its life—to God, who is Love. This deals with the relation of the soul to the life of God manifested in others; it teaches us that when we can say only My Father, not Our Father, we cannot enter into the mind of God, nor pray aright; that if we are not quite in darkness, we are only in the moonlight; if we are touching the hem of Christ's garment, we have not entered with Him the transfiguring cloud; we are not wrapt in that glory, we are only on the verge of light. And as in *Easter Day*, he forces us to face the thoughts, and see whether we really feel what we supposed we did, he shows us we cannot do

without God ; as we found in the one, that the love of God glorifies nature, and alone draws us into sympathy, so in *Christmas Eve* we find that same love it is, which, being shed abroad in our hearts, enables us to love man, to lose sight of what is merely phenomenal and faulty, and to go down to those deeper depths, where we meet in truest sympathy in the sense of a common need, a common aspiration, a common love. If we have been sentimentalising about love, bestowing our charity in inverse proportion to people's nearness to us, Browning brings us, as it were, face to face with our complacent religious selves, and he bids us then follow, cling to Christ, say with our hearts, "Where Thou goest, I will go". Then we listen to those words, "Where two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst"—there I will be present, with infinite compassion and love ; not only with the refined and cultivated and æsthetic, but with those who are in your eyes ugly and ignorant and narrow ; in that miserable little Bethel, out of which you have dashed with contempt, I will be present, because there souls are seeking Me, and are longing for the light, and are therefore growing up into it, though their life does seem so dreary and dark to you ; present with those you despise for utter want of æsthetic sense ; present in the great cathedral, with those too whom you regard as superstitious, because the emotions of their souls are expressed in the ascending incense, the thrilling music, the pictured form. Yes, even with him who knows Me not as a living Presence, but desires truth ; who has with toilsome steps climbed the mountain-tops, that he might dwell in a region of pure light, and who is starving amidst the snows ; even to him I come, breathing warmth and love, and therefore life. None are cast out of My

Presence ; if you cast out from your love any human soul, you must let go then of the hem of that garment from which virtue goes out to all suffering humanity.

I must pass over much, but let me in conclusion notice a musical trilogy which corresponds with the three poems on which I have previously dwelt. And here I may perhaps remark that I know of no modern poet in whom art is so unified as in Browning ; the scenery and sound so harmonised with the thought. He owes his excellence in this partly to his familiarity with Greek drama, especially with Æschylus. Comparing the three poems, we may say *Saul* corresponds to *Hugues of Saxe-Gotha* ; *Caliban*, the debased, the bestial, to the *Toccata of Galuppi* ; *Abt Vogler* to *Lazarus*, the glorified, spiritualised man.

The central poem, *Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha*, represents the truly human, the soul seeking to interpret the perplexed music of earth, arguing, disputing, contending, in the faith that there is a meaning in all, though the final answer is delayed. The very sound is given of the perplexed intricate fugue, with its many melodies, crossing, interpenetrating and moving on together.

“One says his say with a difference ;
More of expounding, explaining ;
All now is wrangle, abuse, and vociference ;
Now there’s a truce, all’s subdued, self-restraining,
Five, though, stands out all the stiffer hence.

Est fuga, volvitur rota,
On we drift : where looms the dim port ?
One, Two, Three, Four, Five, contribute their quota ;
Something is gained, if one caught but the import—
Show it us, Hugues of Saxe-Gotha.

So your fugue broadens and thickens,
Greatens and deepens and lengthens.”

And the same thought of the perplexities of life is

repeated to the sight in the intricate mouldings of the roof. Our scene is a mediæval church, in which the musician lingers; the dim lights are growing dimmer as the sexton extinguishes one after another, and the golden cherubs which reflect some of that feeble light are partly hidden by the cobwebs.

"There! see our roof, its gilt moulding and groining
Under those spider-webs lying.

.
Is it your moral of Life?
Such a web, simple and subtle."

The answer does not come, the meaning cannot be evolved, the vision of glory is only dimly seen through the symbols of earth.

"So we o'ershroud stars and roses,
Cherub and trophy and garland;
Nothings grow somethings which quietly closes
Heaven's earnest eye; not a glimpse of the far land
Gets through our comments and glozes."

And as the last candle by which he has been able to interpret the music, sinks in its socket, he stumbles down the dangerous staircase, out of the dark church into the moonlight silence, whither we cannot follow; the lights of earth extinguished for him, the restless questioning over.

A Toccata of Galuppi's corresponds with *Caliban*. Here we have the low, sensuous, fleshly school, with no outlook beyond the amusements of the immediate present; the scene, a ball-room in Venice. We hear the light, foolish talk, scarcely lulled as the musician begins.

"I can always leave off talking when I hear a master play!"

For the roar of the fugue we have a music like the thin chirp of a cricket, wonderfully imitated in the monosyllabic verse, a sort of grown-up baby language, full of

affectations ; a silly, inane music which brings before us a ghastly vision of dead men and women, for whom life had no meaning at all.

"Did young people take their pleasure when the sun was warm in
May?

Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning ever to midday,
When they make up fresh adventures for the morrow, do you say?

Then they left you for their pleasure, till in due time, one by one,
Some with lives that came to nothing, some with deeds as well un-
done,

Death stepped tacitly and took them, where they never see the sun."

And lastly there is *Abt Vogler*, the music of faith grand and mighty, which evokes the sense of spiritual presences,

"Claiming each slave of the sound at a touch, as when Solomon
willed

Armies of angels that soar, legions of demons that lurk,"

building up a world of real harmony—a true world because ideal.

"Ah, one and all how they helped, would dispart now, and now
combine,

Zealous to hasten the work, heighten their master his praise."

We are no longer shut in, as at Saxe-Gotha, in a church in which the lights are dying out one by one. We are watching a glorious cathedral grow before our eyes, and the glory is ever spreading, and the light is ever increasing, ascending higher and higher, until earth and heaven become one, and the bounds of space and time are lost in an eternal present.

"For higher still and higher (as a runner tips with fire
When a great illumination surprises a festal night),
Outlining round and round Rome's dome from space to spire
Up, the pinnaced glory reached, and the pride of my soul was in
sight."

The lights are climbing from earth to the sky ; we see terrace after terrace shine forth, and the lights are spirits ascending heavenward, even as in Jacob's vision of the angels, ascending ere they descended, and forming, as they lose themselves in the sky, a vision of a Church triumphant, such as Dante beheld in Paradise.

" And another would mount and march like the excellent minion he was,

Ay, another and yet another, one crowd but with many a crest,
Raising my rampired walls of gold as transparent as glass,
Eager to do and die, yield each his place to the rest."

And the music ascends up and up, until the sense of effort is gone, for the highest pinnacle of earthly endeavour is reached, and then the soul sinks into the infinite and is lost, yet lives in the life and light of heaven.

" The emulous heaven yearned down, made effort to reach the earth,
As the earth had done her best, in my passion to scale the sky :
For earth had attained to heaven, there was no more near nor far."

All is then seen not as it is to sense, but as it exists truly in the Divine idea, one day to come forth from the region of being to the region of consciousness. All the possibilities, which to us are not, but which truly are—the Divine ideas, one day to become existent in the visible.

" Nay more ; for there wanted not who walked in the glare and glow,
Presences plain in the place ; or fresh from the Protoplast,
Furnished for ages to come, when a kindlier wind should blow,
Lured now to begin and live."

All this too is seen as existing, which to us was, and is not, but which truly is.

" Or else the wonderful dead who have passed through the body and gone,
But were back once more to breathe in an old world worth their new."

And as the vision of the Infinite opens around, it becomes clear that no energy is lost, no true effort vain, for all life and energy are Divine,

“evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound”.

The music of a holy life may die out on earth, but it exists for ever in the Eternal, the Unchanging, because it is the Divine idea.

“All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist ;
Not its semblance, but itself ; no beauty, nor good, nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist,
When eternity affirms the conception of an hour ;
The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground, to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard ;
Enough that he heard it once : we shall hear it by and by.”

But is it true, as some say, that the teaching of these earlier poems is superseded by that of the later, and so the poet has destroyed his own work ? To me it seems that in the later poems there is a more restful faith than in the earlier ; a belief less vehement, and therefore less struggling. Is there not a deep significance in the beautiful story of *Alcestis* (*Balaustion's Adventure*) ; a real consciousness which needs not proof in *Prospice*, in some passages of *The Ring and the Book*, in *A Wall*, and in the beautiful prologue and epilogue of *Fifine*. The vehement questionings of *La Saisiaz*, what are they but the cries of a present grief, which we all utter, as we see some loved friend pass out of sight. We cry to the whirlwind, “Wherefore ? whereto ?” No answer comes, but the heart replies :—

“Traversed heart must tell its story uncommented on : no less
Mine results in ‘Only grant a second life, I acquiesce
In this present life as failure, count misfortune's worst assaults
Triumph, not defeat ; assured that loss so much the more exalts
Gain about to be. For at that moment did I so advance
Near to knowledge, as when frustrate of escape from ignorance ?

Did not beauty prove most precious when its opposite obtained
Rule, and truth seem more than ever potent because falsehood
reigned?

While for love—Oh how but, losing love, does whoso loves succeed
By the death-pang to the birth-throe—learning what is love indeed?
Only grant my soul may carry high through death her cup unspilled,
Brimming though it be with knowledge, life's loss drop by drop
distilled,

I shall boast it mine—the balsam, bless each kindly wretch that
wrung

From life's tree its inmost virtue, tapped the root whence pleasure
sprung,

Barked the bole, and broke the bough, and bruised the berry, left all
grace

Ashes in death's stern alembic, loosed elixir in its place! "

I grant that in the later poems he cares less to formulate. As we climb higher and our vision widens, that which once seemed the whole truth now takes its place as part only of a larger, more embracing unity. In our individual lives, as in the world's history, we follow the sun in his course; but horizons change, and we never reach the land of light; truth recedes, but it is to tempt us onward; the crystal spheres of the world's childhood are broken, and if for a moment the soul flutters down and stands panting upon some solid cliff, she rises thence, having plumed her pinions for a longer flight; she returns again and again only to renew her strength, and at last, in all the might of a great trust in the All-good, she wings her flight into the infinite unknown. This utter trust is proved only when we can go forth, as the faithful of old, not knowing whither we go:—

“truth is truth in each degree;

Thunderpealed by God to nature, whispered by my soul to me.

Nay, the weakness turns to strength and triumphs in a strength
beyond:

‘Mine is but man's truest answer—how were it did God respond?’

I shall no more dare to mimic such response in futile speech,
Pass off human lisp as echo of the sphere-song out of reach."

"Only a learner,
Quick one or slow one,
Just a discerner,
I would teach no one."

(*Pisgah Sights.*)

The lesson taught in the earlier poem of *Saul* is repeated in the latest, that the love shed abroad in our hearts is the witness for a Divine love which we can trust for ever and ever ; and it is the strength of this inner consciousness, the witness of the spirit, that has enabled the poet-seers of all ages to sing loud above the storm-waves their Gloria in excelsis.

"Soul that canst soar !
Body may slumber,
Body shall cumber
Soul-flight no more.

Waft of soul's wing !
What lies above ?
Sunshine and love."

(*Pisgah Sights.*)

Perhaps I may, in conclusion, sum up a few of the reasons why we many of us turn to Browning for help.

Are we oppressed with pessimism, discontented with all that is? He tells us this is the witness to our own nobility, and to a future immortality.

"Progress is man's distinctive mark alone,
Not God's, and not the beasts': God is, they are,
Man partly is, and wholly hopes to be."

(*Death in the Desert.*)

"'Tis not what man does which exalts him, but what man
Would do."

(*Saul.*)

"for mankind springs
Salvation by each hindrance interposed ;
They climb."

(*Sordello.*)

"They are perfect—how else? they shall never change;
We are faulty—why not? we have time in store."

(Pictures in Florence.)

"He said, 'What's time? Leave Now for dogs and apes!
Man has Forever.'"

(Grammarians' Funeral.)

Do we cry out that we are tired of battling with the waves, and does it seem a weary quest ever to be following the light, never reaching it? He tells us that gradual development is the condition of our spiritual health, *i.e.* of life:—

"——this gift of truth
Once grasped, were this our soul's gain safe, and sure
To prosper as the body's gain is wont,—
Why man's probation would conclude".

Do we complain of error? He tells us this is partial truth, that the imperfect must precede the perfect, that disappointment and darkness is an earnest of real success.

"God's gift was that man should conceive of truth
And yearn to gain it, catching at mistake."
(Death in the Desert.)

"Imperfection means perfection hid,
Reserved in part, to grace the after time."
(Cleon.)

"And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence
For the fulness of the days? Have we withered or agonised?
Why else was the pause prolonged, but that singing might issue
thence?
Why rushed the discords in, but that harmony should be prized?"
(Abt. Vogler.)

"If I stoop
Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
It is but for a time; I press God's lamp
Close to my breast; its splendour soon or late
Will pierce the gloom."

(Paracelsus.)

" Love, wrong, and pain, what see I else around ?
Yea, and the resurrection and uprise
To the right hand of the throne

If ye demur, this judgment on your head—
Never to reach the ultimate, angels' law ;
There, where law, life, joy, impulse are one thing."

(Death in the Desert.)

Do we doubt the goodness of God when we see some hideous evil? He tells us that only through the contest with evil can man pass to power and glory.

" Why comes temptation, but for man to meet
And master, and make crouch beneath his foot ;
And so be pedestalled in triumph? Pray,
' Lead us into no such temptations, Lord ' ?
Yea, but, O thou, whose servants are the bold,
Lead such temptations by the head and hair,
Reluctant dragons, up to who dares fight,
That so he may do battle, and have praise."

(The Ring and the Book.)

Do we find in old age the sight and sounds by which the soul learned truth fading in the darkness, the active powers failing? This is an earnest not of death, but of life. God is taking away the earthly sight that the " celestial light " may so much the more shine inward. He is withdrawing us into some quiet retreat, that we may " ponder on the entire past " ; the evening shades are gathering that we may sleep and wake refreshed.

" Lie bare, to the universal prick of light !
Is it for nothing we grow old and weak,
We whom God loves ? "

(Death in the Desert.)

" Ponder on the entire past
Laid together thus at last,
When the twilight helps to fuse
The first fresh with the faded hues,
And the outline of the whole,

As round eve's shades their framework roll,
Gladly fronts for once thy soul.
And then, as 'mid the dark, a gleam
Of yet another morning breaks,
And, like the hand which ends a dream,
Death, with the might of his sunbeam,
Touches the flesh, and the soul awakes,
Then——"

(Flight of the Duchess.)

"So, still within this life,
Though lifted o'er its strife,
Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last.

So, better, age, exempt
From strife, should know than tempt
Further. Thou waitedst age: wait death nor be afraid."

(Rabbi Ben Ezra.)

"And stung by straitness of our life made strait
On purpose to make sweet the life at large,
Freed by the throbbing impulse we call death,
We burst there, as the worm into the fly,
Who, while a worm still, wants his wings."

(Cleon.)

Christmas Eve.

MR. BROWNING'S *Christmas Eve* is a study, developing the ethical significance of Christian teaching. It was published in 1850, together with *Easter Day*; being one of five important poems, written apparently between 1850 and 1864, in which our poet deals with the fundamental truths of Christianity. Part of *Saul* (sections 1-9) had indeed appeared in 1845, but the distinctively Christian portion was not published till ten years after, together with the Epistle of Kharshish. The Death in the Desert was first printed in 1864. To the year 1852 belongs the Introductory Essay on Shelley, reprinted in volume i. of the Browning Society Papers. May we not think that the poet was speaking out of his own experience when he tells us of Shelley: "He endeavoured to realise, as he went on idealising; gradually he was raised to the great Abstract Light, and through the discrepancy of creation, to the sufficiency of the First Cause—I shall say what I think. Had Shelley lived he would finally have ranged himself with the Christians. Already he had attained to a profession of worship to the spirit of good within"? I think we may trace in our poet's work, too, during these years, a growing power to "realise, whilst idealising," as though the old forms were undergoing for him a "metamorphosis," a transfiguration. Are not the words often true for the individual, as for the world, "Yet a little while and thou shalt not see Me, and again a little while and thou shalt see Me"? We lose the vision of truth which is received through the sense alone, apprehended by the *understanding*—to

behold a vision, which eye cannot see, nor ear hear, but which is revealed by the spirit, and embraced by *reason*. We pass beyond the thought of a God speaking to us from without through the visible Kosmos, to the thought of a God manifested in that Holy of Holies, that inmost shrine, the spirit of man. We pass beyond the adoring worship of God's glory revealed in outward nature, to the thought of a personal Presence—

"I forgot all about the sky,"

"Ah, whose foot shall I see emerge?"

In the order of thought, Mr. Browning's *Easter Day* precedes *Christmas Eve*, and though the latter is different in form, it reminds us of Clough's poem *Easter Day*, for in the opening pages one hears the same question—Is Christ risen? Can He have come to redeem a world yet unredeemed? Is there indeed an Immanuel, a God with us? Can we believe it, when we look upon the world without; look upon ignorance and sectarianism; upon idolatry and hypocrisy; upon the sceptic, seeking and finding not?

In fact, *Christmas Eve* is an attempt to bring home, not to sense, but to consciousness, the central truth of Christianity. The poem is a sort of colloquy of the soul on the special teaching of Christmas Day, on the Incarnation in its largest sense, *i.e.*, on the mode of God's manifestation to the creature.

290

"God, Whose pleasure brought

Man into being, stands away
As it were a handbreadth off, to give
Room for the newly made to live,
And look at Him from a place apart,
And use his gifts of brain and heart."¹

¹ Am I wrong in thinking that the poet owed something of his inspiration to the Regenerator of Germany, the eloquent author of *Wissenschaftslehre*?

Thus he does not bid us look only at a far-off vision of the past, we behold the Christ revealed in time, that we may realise the Divine indwelling, as an eternal fact of consciousness, the union of God and man. And the realisation of the Christ-revelation is shown to be a transfiguring power as regards the moral being, energising the spiritual faculties, quickening insight, arousing sympathy, and therefore kindling love. All this is expressed in the wonderful vision (lines 420 *et seq.*).

Hence is the poem, too, an Eirenicon, teaching us that all are united by the life of love who are moved by the presence of God in Nature, in Scripture, in the Church, in the mind of man—these are united, not by dogma, *i.e.* by knowledge attained, but by the common life of discipleship—they are seekers after God, and only when they cease to follow after, do they lose the hem of Christ's garment.

One office of the poet is to stir our souls, and thus energise our spiritual faculties, so that we may be able to assimilate, to embrace in the sphere of consciousness those truths which remain for ever a dim, unapprehended vision for the apathetic, and also be made conscious of those spiritual affinities, by which those are united who yet stand opposed to one another as separate individualities.

As regards the form, may I say, there are few poems which to my mind contain so much that is artistically repulsive—double rhymes, grotesque illustrations, arguments at full length in verse metre; but there are also passages of wonderful artistic beauty (as the lunar rainbow of *Christmas Eve*, and the glowing sky of *Easter Day*), thoughts so illuminated that one can never lose the impression of them.

But however much Mr. Browning may be charged with failure in form, few deny his pre-eminence as a



dramatist, if we are content to define a dramatist as one who reveals to us the real man moving and acting, the hidden self revealed through deed, or word, or scarce articulate thought. The true drama shows us the man, melodrama the movements of puppets. Many prefer the latter to the former. Of action in the ordinary sense there is little, even in those poems which Mr. Browning calls dramatic; but there is the movement upward of the human soul, its struggles to rise out of darkness to light within that globe—

“ that hollow space
That rounds the mortal temples of a man ”.

Mrs. Browning speaks of this when she says:—

“ Take for a worthier stage, the soul itself,
Its shifting fancies, and celestial lights,
With all its grand orchestral silences
To keep the pauses of the rhythmic sounds ”.

In this sense *Christmas Eve* too is dramatic.

My readers must take the poem in hand, and I will try to guide them through what seem at first its mazy wanderings. Here, as ever, the stage is suited to the action, the surroundings in harmony with the thought. What a scene of utter desolation and barrenness have we in the opening description of the bleak common, that gusty night—how miserable is the vista of gravel pits, of broken palings, of squalid alleys, whence emerge the sickly inhabitants, suffering from all the ills of physical, intellectual, and moral starvation. It may be questioned whether Mr. Browning is a poet, but he is *certainly* a seer. He looks right at things as they are in the present, he compels us to face them too, and they seem ugly and mean; then he looks not *at* but *into* them, and he teaches us it is because we look at the world from the outside only that our faith fails. He sees “not after the sight of the eyes, but beholds”

"Through all the outer crust of roughest mood
The true heart beating with the life divine,"¹

sees all things as they truly are—*i.e.*, as they are becoming—all the spiritual possibilities enfolded in this body of earth, sees with prophetic insight

260

"the spark

Even where to most the whole seems dark"—

"Within the green, the mouldered tree"—²

sees the true "forms" in Aristotle's sense, hidden beneath the appearance, sees them not in time, but *sub specie æternitatis*—and he too is comforted, like the prophet of old, by the thought that all flesh is grass, that this imperfect world shall pass away into a world perfected in God's ideal—according to that Wisdom, that Word of God which works in eternity, which shall stand for ever.

"There shall never be one lost good! What was shall live as before."³

And so he is reconciled to the existence of evil (I mean by evil, defect, imperfection, not wickedness), (1) because it is the condition of knowledge at all; (2) because it is the condition of life. The alloy is necessary to fashion the pure gold;⁴ the "blessed evil," the clouds of earth, to shelter from the blaze of Divine Glory:—

"Clouds obscure

But for which obscuration all were bright?

Too hastily concluded! Sun-suffused,

A cloud may sooth the eye made blind by blaze—

Better the very clarity of heaven."⁵

¹ Things New and Old (Plumptre).

² In Memoriam.

³ Abt. Vogler.

⁴ Bishop Blougram's Apology.

⁵ The Ring and the Book.

" Pure faith indeed—you know not what you ask !
 Naked belief in God the Omnipotent,
 Omniscient, Omnipresent, sears too much
 The sense of conscious creatures to be borne.
 It were the seeing Him no flesh shall dare.
 Some think Creation's meant to show Him forth :
 I say, it's meant to hide Him all it can,
 And that's what all the blessed evil's for.
 Its use in Time is to environ us,
 Our breath, our drop of dew, with shield enough
 Against that sight, till we can bear its stress.
 Under a vertical sun, the exposed brain
 And lidless eye, and disemprisoned heart,
 Less certainly would wither up,
 Than mind confronted with the truth of Him."

The moral world into which we are introduced in
Christmas Eve is shadowed forth too by the scenery
 of that fitful night which reminds us of the quaint
 books of emblems. We look up to heaven, and the
 clouds seem built up "block on block," and we catch
 glimpses of the light only through fissures—so there is
 light struggling with darkness in Zion Chapel.

216 " What a mingled weft
 Of good and ill !
 But, alas for the excellent earnestness,
 And the truths quite true if stated succinctly,
 But as surely false in their quaint presentment."

With a boldness of illustration which none but Mr.
 Browning would have ventured on, he tells us that to
 him who has music in the soul the discordant rattle
 in a train may suggest orchestral music. (Do roses
 stick like burrs?) we say, as we regret the horrible
 rhymes, but we are so glad of the thought, that we try
 to forgive. All discords may become musical to those
 who can harmonise them.

249 " A tune was born in my head last week
 Out of the thump, thump, and shriek, shriek,
 Of the train."

So "rush the discords in," and out of them harmony is evolved. So God brings good out of evil, out of that darkness and limitation from which we are being delivered.

Still, in view of the ignorance, the misery and selfishness, the division even of Christendom, it seems "hard to be a Christian," especially hard when "each performs the Grand Inquisitor". Repelled by unsympathetic people, by sights and sounds which jar on the senses, and by the grotesque forms in which truth is clothed, the speaker "flung out of the little chapel"—out of the oppressive atmosphere of sectarianism, into his own church, the temple of Nature, where he had learned to worship.

278 "I entered God's church door, nature leading me;
In youth I looked to these very skies,
And probing their immensities
I found God there, His visible power
Yet felt in my heart, amid all its sense
Of the power, an equal evidence
That His love, there too, was the nobler dower;
For the loving worm within its clod,
Were diviner than a loveless god—"

The scene within is contrasted with that without, and yet there is a correspondence—he found himself in a world dark, but not altogether dark—there was light shining in the darkness, striving to pierce the ramparted cloud prison.

298 "Through its fissures you got hints
Of the flying moon, by the shifting tints,
Now a dull lion-colour, now brassy
Burning to yellow, and whitest yellow,
Like the furnace-smoke just ere the flames bellow,
All a-simmer with intense strain
To let her through—"

There was light enough just to show his way, "the narrow path directly across the common," leading him

"gently all the way up hill," and as he goes his own way, he marvels at other people's ways. Can their way of worship be acceptable to God? Yes; such worship, if it be true, and the best they can give, is the best *for them*. "God desires not," writes Fichte, "religion unconditionally, but only under the conditions of freedom,"—not the faultless service of a machine.

303 "That prayed or praised all unaware
Of its fitness for aught but praise and prayer
Made perfect as a thing of course."

God has

308 "ordained divorce
Of the rock from His boundless continent".

Our life is differentiated from His, that we may become in a true sense "living souls," true persons, receive into ourselves Divine ideas, and rising out of the world of mere phenomena, climbing out of the ocean of the visible,¹ standing on our "pin-point rock," may look up to Him, and thus our personality may grow, our strength develop, and

313 "Man's hand, first formed to carry
A few pounds' weight, when taught to marry
Its strength with an engine's, lifts a mountain".

Freedom is the condition of man's power to grow into a true man, and thus to glorify God; so man must be—

"Able, God's own word saith, to grieve Him".

God has necessarily left man the power to narrow the stream, but God's love remains the ever-springing fountain.

Here as in Saul, the poet "justifies" the ways of God to man, not with an affirmation only; he shows not merely God is love, but he brings us through a

¹ Compare Fifine—the same thought seems to be expressed in the Indian emblem of the lotus.

moral reduction *ad absurdum*, to the words, God *must* be love.

"Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
That I doubt his own love can compete with it? Here the parts shift,
Here the creatures surpass the Creator—"

333

"He, the Eternal First and Last,
Who in His power had so surpassed
All man conceives of what is might—
Whose wisdom, too, showed infinite
Will prove as infinitely good".

God cannot be working on through myriad ages to perfect the "stupid earth". He cannot have wrought out perfection.

343

"in the leaf or stone
(So that to master this alone,
This done in the stone or leaf for me,
I must go on learning endlessly)"

and yet leave man's desires unsatisfied,

339

"With power to work all love desires,
Bestow e'en less than man requires".

He must be leading upwards those who are feeling after Him, if haply they may find Him; He must embrace them in His pity and His love. His purposes are being wrought out in them, through the earthly existence, in which men get to know the not-self, to realise the Divine objectively and subjectively :—

359

"love which on earth amid all the shows of it,
Has ever been seen the sole good of life in it,
The love ever growing there, spite of the strife in it,
Shall arise, made perfect, from death's repose of it".

And then man will understand what he must now believe, that God's love is shining through all; the beatific vision shall be his, not of the Almighty Force,

which Nature tells of, but the exceeding love to which our inmost souls bear witness.

“And I shall behold thee face to face.”

Beauty is the pledge of love—one day the spirit will rejoice in the love made manifest, as the eye delights now in beauty, and then we shall know

365 “How in all we loved here, still wast Thou”.

And as he takes this pantheistic thought to his heart, “pressing to God,” as he glories in God, for the manifold beauty, and gazes up to the sky—lo! the clouds and darkness are swept away; he sees heaven opened, and there appears to him a sign in the heavens above. There emerges from the storm-clouds *for him* a vision of exceeding loveliness; he sees it not in the clear sky, but surrounded with mystery; the beauty of those fleecy cloudlets painted with rainbow hues is more tender, more alluring, more ideal, than the silvery glory of the cloudless sky.

385 “’Twas a moon-rainbow, vast and perfect,
From heaven to heaven extending, perfect
As the mother moon’s self, full in face
It rose, distinctly at the base
With its seven proper colours chorded,
Which still in the rising were compressed,
Until at last they were coalesced,
And supreme the spectral creature lorded
In a triumph of whitest white,
Above which intervened the night;
But above night, too, like only the next,
The second of a wondrous sequence,
Reaching in rare and rarer frequency
Till the heaven of heavens were circumflexed,
Another rainbow rose, a mightier
Fainter, flushier, and flightier,—
Rapture dying along its verge.”

Yes, this vision was revealed for *him*:—

1204 "God's own hand did the rainbow weave,
Whereby the truth from Heaven slid
Into *my* soul! I cannot bid
The world admit He stooped to heal
My soul, as if in a thunder-peal,
Where one heard noise, and one saw flame,
I only know, He named my name."

The highest truth is intuitive—like light it is its own witness. Here he had beheld the cloud of glory, the vision of transfiguration. In this his *own* vision of truth, he would rest satisfied—a Dyaus revealed in the heavens, and glorifying the earth; a God whose voice was heard in creation, Whose presence was felt in Nature; here he would build *his* tabernacle and abide.

412 "Good were it to be ever here
If Thou wilt let me build to Thee
Service-tabernacles three,
Where, forever in Thy presence,
Far alike from thriftless learning
And ignorance's undiscerning,
I may worship and remain."

Nay! we may not tabernacle in the truth attained—"We must ever be letting *our* best go to find something better".¹ He could not rest in that revelation only. The consciousness of a presence in Nature prepares him for a higher one—of a personal God; the vision of infinite power and infinite wisdom leads him on to feel there *must* be infinite love, and if love, then that love must shine forth. God must bless man by manifesting His glory, so that the heart may embrace the infinite goodness.

402 "Ah! whose foot shall I see emerge,
Whose, from the straining topmost dark
On to the keystone of that arc?"

God's glory may be mirrored in creation, but only to

¹ Across the Hills, by Mrs. James Owen (Kegan Paul).

consciousness is it revealed—*εἰδῆσαι* must become *συνείδμεναι*
the eye cannot see

War nicht das Auge sonnenhaft
Die Sonne könnt es nie erblicken,
Läg nicht in uns des Gottes eigne Kraft
Wie könnt uns Göttliches entzücken.¹

When the human consciousness, embracing nature, meets the Divine thought, then the subjective and objective, heaven and earth, the seen and the unseen, form one Divine word for man, sight becomes insight; the world of knowledge embraced in time and space is included in a moral world of eternal realities; and then we know God, not, as at first, as Dyaus-Pitar, but as the Spirit Father, in whom alone, as all Philosophy teaches, a universe can exist; and the consciousness of love within enables us to interpret the love manifested in Nature. Thus the reaching forth of the soul to God is the witness to a personal God,—

“The dumb motions of imperfect life
Are oracles of vital Deity”.

This is the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit.
“This is the true self, the God in us, meeting and recognising God in something else, and springing with joy to meet Him.”²

“Truth is within ourselves: it takes no rise
From outward things, whate’er you may believe.
There is an inmost centre in us all,
Where truth abides in fulness; and around
Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,
This perfect clear perception—which is truth.
A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
Blinds it, and makes all error; and to *know*
Rather consists in opening out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape
Than in effecting entry for a light
Supposed to be without.”³

¹ Göthe.

² Across the hills.

³ Paracelsus, p. 71.

So in Luria, which is a study of a man in whom dwelt the fulness of the Christ-life, who through that power was able to send away sin, we read—

“ God glows above
With scarce an intervention, presses close
And palpitatingly His soul o’er ours.
We feel Him, nor by painful reason know.”

There must be this “recognition”; there must be the mystic bridal of the psyche and pneuma, the marriage of earth and heaven; truly our inmost being believes in an Incarnation, and so from this imperfect outward vision in nature we must pass on to vision of Christ.

Rahel Varnhagen writes thus :—

“ I once dreamt, when I was seven years old, that I saw our Heavenly Father quite close. He leant over me, and his mantle stretched out wide as the heavens. Upon a corner of this mantle, I was allowed to rest, and lay down to sleep with a blissful sense of repose. The dream has recurred again and again in the course of my life, and sleeping or waking, it has been in my deepest sorrows a Divine consolation, that I might thus rest in heavenly keeping, free from every care.”

Was it that beautiful vision of the child—a vision which appeared again and again, beneath the storm-clouds of earth, that entered the poet’s soul and made it prophetic? I know not whether he first saw it in the magic mirror of another soul, or directly in his own heart; but it became to him a vision of the Incarnation. This beautiful garment of thought he has not simply adopted and worn; it is his own. This Divine presence (it is a central thought in our poet, as in St. John and St. Paul) is realised only in the conscious soul, the *νοῦς*, the true *ναός*.

“ I felt my brain
Glutted with the glory, blazing
Throughout its whole mass, over and under,
Until at length it burst asunder,

And out of it bodily there streamed
The too-much glory, as it seemed,
Passing from out me to the ground.
Then palely serpentine round
Into the dark with mazy error."

"All at once I looked up with terror,
He was there."—

448 "I forgot all about the sky,
And my pulses leaped for joy,
Of the golden thought without alloy,
That I saw His very vesture's hem.
Then rushed the blood back, cold and clear
With a fresh enhancing shiver of fear;
And I hastened, cried out, while I pressed
To the salvation of the vest."

The vision of Christ is able to call forth the spiritual potentialities of man, and in the spiritual light, in the conscious presence of that personality, in which ours lives, the soul evolves its own energies, and the Christ in us develops the spiritual body through that higher synthesis in which the self and the not-self are one. Thus the merely external vision of a God in Nature fades away in the joy of realising the presence of a God *in* Man, of a loving, personal God; the old best is gone, that it may grow into a better, the flower become the fruit.

Immediately the aspect of things is altered by the change in his *moral* consciousness. So the vision of the Perfect One lightens our eyes, makes us "living creatures full of eyes"—then the contemptuous, cynical, worldly spirit is gone, for there is the spiritual insight of sympathy with suffering man.

81 "A tall yellow man like the Penitent Thief,
With his jaw tied up in a handkerchief,
Showing us a horrible wen inside it,"

is repulsive to the selfish, but the Lord has compassion. That weary woman-mother with the draggled shawl, that shoemaker lad with a wizened face, that "female something, all that was left of a woman," that preacher groping for the light, these were Christ's friends, to these He draws near, to the "great multitude of impotent folk, blind, halt, maimed, waiting for the moving of the waters". To see the kingdom of God in these human souls, one must receive himself the baptism of fire. There follows a paragraph of surpassing beauty, which tells us of plenary absolution. When,

406

"have mercy, Lord, on us !

The whole face turned upon me full,
And I spread myself beneath it,
As when the bleacher spreads to seethe it,
In the cleansing sun, his wool,—
Steeps in the sun of noontide whiteness,
Some defiled, discoloured web—
So lay I, saturate with brightness."

conscious of sin, he had fallen at the Lord's feet—he is baptised, bathed in light, and purified, the evil disappears, even as the dark spots from the garment spread in the sunlight.

443

"So lay I, saturate with brightness,
And when the flood appeared to ebb,
Lo, I was walking light and swift."

The glory of God had descended from heaven for him, and wrapt him round with love—his spirit is no longer isolated, looking at God from afar, but consciously enfolded in the divine glory, instinct with divine insight, he feels the infinite sympathies, and so, as St. John expresses it, knows all things, is united to all, through the divine communion ; and the consciousness of this love enfolding him, and filling the world, carries him safely through the perplexities of life—this is the

garment of Christ. We can take hold only of the hem, but if we hold by that portion of the blessed, immeasurable truth which God has given to our grasp, He will lead us ever onward. The penitent pleads that if he was wrong in the scorn and the contempt he had felt, yet he was right in objecting to the grotesque expression of religious truth.

467 " I thought it best that Thou, the Spirit,
 Be worshipped in spirit and in truth,
 And in beauty, as even we require it,
 Not in the forms burlesque, uncouth."

No answer is given, but folded in the garment, he is swept to another region. There rises before him, in contrast to Zion Chapel, a church, grand and massive, upon which has been lavished all that riches and art can bestow, and to this church

537 " With arms wide open to embrace
 The entry of the human race,"

there come not a few miserable creatures making their way through the wilderness. Here

561 " As the swarming hollow of a hive,
 The whole Basilica's alive !"

For guttering candles, we see—

 " The taper fires
 Pant up, the winding brazen spires
 Heave loftier yet the badalchin,
 The incense gaspings long kept in,
 Suspire in clouds".

Here no discordant sounds, but a murmur of mystic music sustains the soul through an awful pause of silent expectation ; and then in the dim distance, soft and sweet, the silvery notes are heard.

503 "Earth breaks up, time drops away,
In flows heaven, with its new day."

And the glorious chorale proclaims the advent of Him

"Who is the King of kings, the Lord of lords".

Is he satisfied now? No, he feels the artist's rapture,
but his true spiritual self can no more enter this mirac-
ulous Dome than Zion Chapel; still though he cannot
join in the worship, he has ceased to despise; he can
now see some truth

619 "Which He, Whose eye detects a spark
May well see there, where each beholder
Acknowledges the embers smoulder".

Still, if such worship is not true *for him*, he must not
enter

623 "For I, a mere man, fear to quit
The clue God gave *me* as most fit
To guide my footsteps through life's maze,
Because Himself discerns all ways
Open to reach Him".

Still his tolerance grows to sympathy, and feeling
seems more than thought. True the victorious love—

649 "of those first Christian days"—

had once cast down art; but need this be—heathen
art was impure, sensuous—now poetry, music, archi-
tecture, "all the majesties of art"

725 "Christians offer to God".

Need he seek truth so exclusively?

732 "Too much love there can never be"—

702 "I will be wise another time
And not desire a wall between us
When next I see a church roof cover
So many species of one genus,
All with foreheads bearing *lover*".

He will accept the doctrine of complementary truths. Another grotesque illustration follows which fixes in our imagination a thought frequently expressed by our poet. There is surely one all-comprehending Mind, the Truth, which embracing the separate and partial truths, co-ordinates them, and produces that perfect form, of which finite being conceives only a part. One man conceives of a Colossus, an ideal too vast for the materials he has, too vast for his life work ; he does not therefore give up the attempt to realise it, but he does his part, and dying leaves the completion to another. There was found at Rome the Church

611 "Whose faith's *heart* beat, though her head swims
Too giddily to guide her limbs".

The body, the heart is in Rome, may he hope to find the head elsewhere, and so he is swept on

"Sucked along in the flying wake
Of the luminous water snake—"

he comes to Göttingen. Of the 1,300 lines in the poem, 500 belong to the Göttingen episode. The picture of the lecture-room is a masterpiece. Its pre-raphaelite realism harmonises with the unimaginative analytic of the "hawk-nosed, high cheek-boned professor," the passionless enthusiast. Here he finds what Bacon calls *lumen siccum*, what later philosophers call understanding without reason ; here is criticism, destruction, analysis, but no synthesis ; the teacher stands on his own pinpoint rock of individualism, and ignores the ocean, the universal conscience—the facts of the moral world, he ignores, instead of accounting for, the consciousness of the Divine in Christ, and the response of man's heart to the teaching of the Christ.

898 "This time he would not bid me enter
The exhausted air-bell of the Critic."

Man cannot breathe in an atmosphere exhausted of spirit, he must worship.

The Professor is suffering spiritual consumption, he is not fully vitalised.

818 "—he uttered a kind of cough preludious
That awoke my sympathetic spasm."

Still there is a beauty and purity which attract ; his

"grave voice is sweet though hoarse,"

and there is

"a wan pure look well-nigh celestial,"

a feverish life ; but there is feebleness, he lacks the energy which comes from breathing that larger life, in which alone the spirit grows vigorous and strong. In fifty lines the teaching of Strauss is summarised, then we have the poet's musing as he waits outside. I cannot say that the following pages commend themselves to me, and shall not attempt to follow the arguments, but there are thoughts for which we are grateful, however expressed, and there are grand passages in which Mr. Browning takes us down to the basis of belief.

1018 "Take all in a word : the truth in God's breast
Lies trace for trace upon ours impressed,
Though He is so bright and we so dim,
We are made in His image to witness Him."

The ultimate ground of faith he finds with Kant and Fichte in the moral sense. He is one with the Agnostic in this deepest truth of all, that right is right, not because God exists and wills it, but because it is right. Not an Almighty Zeus could overturn for us the foundations of right and wrong, and bid us pronounce unjust judgment.

1026 "Though justice, good and truth were still
Divine, if, by some demon's will,
Hatred and wrong had been proclaimed
Law through the worlds, and right misnamed."

"The being of God is a law to His works, for that perfection which God is, giveth perfection to that He doth."—Hooker.

There is a profound faith in the Being of the All-good, deeper than mere belief in His Existence—faith in a Seyn beyond the Daseyn, which is the witness that in man the Absolute Goodness exists, the Light lightening every man ; and thus man's own existence is a witness to the existence of an Absolute Goodness, the witness to the Being of God.

"Whom do you count the worst man upon earth?
Be sure he knows in his conscience more
Of what right is, than arrives at birth
In the best man's acts that we bow before."

And this witness is truly Catholic, is borne by Humanity—even the Professor and his audience, while questioning the existence of the Christ, worship the vision of the All-good, and they turn from all other learning to search the depths of divine philosophy. Meditating thus, he grows calm and judicial, he sees good in all ; with the immortal Alice, he begins to think everybody is right. Recognising this fundamental union of all men, he is inclined to pass from sectarian intolerance, to a catholic indifference, to pursue a pilgrimage

1154 "To many peoples, various climes,
Where I may see saint, savage, sage,
Fuse their respective creeds in one,
Before the general Father's throne."

He is tired and wants rest.

1137 "This tolerance is a genial mood !"
He will

"sit above, viewing all creeds".¹

"There is nothing," writes Fichte, "further from real

¹ Tennyson's Palace of Art.

love of man than a certain tender-hearted catholicity of sentiment, much bepraised now. This, far from being the love of God, comes from an absolute shallowness and vagrancy of mind, capable neither of love nor hate."

1167 "But when his foolish heart begins to expand
In the lazy glow of benevolence,"

when he is sinking into the spiritual apathy which is death, when "weary of tracking and testing," he resolves to settle down into a mild indifferentism,

1158 "'Twas the horrible storm began afresh,
The black night caught me in his mesh,
Whirled me up, and flung me prone.

Far, far away the receding gesture
And looming of the lessening vesture."

Not error, not doubt, not the uttermost scepticism is death ; out of these, we struggle to rise ; but a philistine agnosticism, acquiescence in wrong, lazy indifference, this to our poet is alone wickedness. The thought is fully expounded in Fichte's Religions Lehre. Not in attainment, but in effort, not in knowledge, but in aspiration, is the end of life attained, *viz.*, the development of self through victory over the evil, the imperfect, the dead. No chalice, beautiful in form and colour, can quench the thirst of him who asks for living water.

So the best utterance each can give to the truth which God has revealed to his soul is the best worship for each ; through this truth, however imperfect, if he be faithful to it, he does hold communication with the Christ, and is climbing the ladder from earth to heaven—

"The moral efforts of all ages," writes Mr. Goldwin Smith, "will be efforts to realise His character, and an infinite variety of character will be produced, ranging from the highest human grandeur to the very verge of the grotesque".

Once more we find ourselves in the chapel, listening to the mystical application of Pharoah's Dream. Finding—

“the sermon proves no reading
Where bee-like in the flowers I may bury me
Like Taylor's, the immortal Jeremy!”

Yet he finds that water is

“welling up from underground”.

As we have it in Paracelsus—

“Love which endures and doubts, and is oppressed,
And cherished, suffering much and much sustained,
And blind, oft-failing, yet believing love,
A half-enlightened, often-chequered, trust”.

And thus we come back to the opening thought. There is the world of the visible, the world of sense, into which we are born, in which we are buried, out of which we are to rise into the spiritual world. We climb out of the ocean, *i.e.*, “the boundless continent, to our own pin-point rock,” our little world, our Mount Zion, or Cathedral, or Lecture Hall. Upon that rock in the ocean, that watch tower (as we have it in Cleon), we look upon the universe—down into the depths, around upon the sunlit surface, or through the cloudy billows to the far-off lights of Heaven upwards. Here we struggle for life, holding on through the storm; sometimes we are cast down by the waves, but as we struggle, we grow strong, each learns in his own case what “all the blessed evil's for,” and therefore trusts God for others; the poet is sure that as God has drawn him near, called him by his name, so He is caring too for these ruins of humanity, for all who are seeking Him, if haply they may find Him—he has gained a fuller understanding of the Lord's words—“where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I”. And so he concludes with the Doxology.

New Wine.

**"Through the ages one unchanging purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened by the process of the suns."**

I HAVE chosen for my motto a somewhat hackneyed quotation, and the fact that it is so often quoted recommends it to me, as proving it contains a thought which comes home to the mind and heart of this generation—the thought that there is a process of development, not physical only, but mental and spiritual, not for individual men only, but for man, for Humanity. We have been searching the world's archives for the descent of man, and we have discovered his ascent.

And how has man risen? He, the Adam, the earth-born, has climbed like some flower out of his dark grave of ignorance, awakened by the touch of light, by the vision, through the senses, of created things, and ever as he turned his face sunward,—ever as the sun rose higher, and fresh floods of light streamed from heaven, has he grown in glory and beauty. "By the process of the suns" has man's soul been awakened, and as in reverent contemplation he searches into the mystery of the visible, there rises before him a vision of the things which "eye hath not seen"—the realities, of which these things are "the patterns".

But whilst admitting that light has come to man from without, whilst seeing the work of God in Nature, we must recognise also the work of man himself in the harvest field. In the sweat of his brow does he eat bread—not only, if he would live, must he search out new truths, but each generation must bring fresh life

out of the old ones—must dig about the old fig tree, and lay on the fruit-bearing soil—must cut down the dead branches of the vine, and with labour and pain, plant and water, watch and wait, ere the rich fruit appear, ere from the ripe clusters one may press out the rich red wine ; each generation must provide new vessels for the new wine, the good wine, which God hath kept until now.

I shall endeavour in the following paper to illustrate the motto I have chosen by taking some pages from the history of inductive science during the last few centuries, and to show from these, how man has been gradually educated to receive larger intellectual conceptions, greater moral and religious inspirations.

Three times especially as it seems to me, in these last days, has a door been opened into the heavens, a new vision of Divine glory has pierced the clouds which bound our little earth, and a voice, as of a trumpet, has been heard calling upon man, the finite, the child of time, the victim of death, to draw nearer to the throne of God, that he may know the Infinite, the Eternal, the only true Life. But each time he has been dazzled, blinded by the sudden blaze ; the darkness has *seemed* to gather round him, and he has had to wait until his eye became used to the unaccustomed splendour. Each time men have cried that belief was perishing, but the true opinions changed into knowledge, for “opinion is but knowledge in the making” ; and the false ones dying down became the soil, out of which was quickened into life a larger, a more living faith.

A period like the present of doubt and discouragement was the beginning of the time which we now call the Renaissance, the new birth of thought and discovery—the time when dead and dying faiths put forth fresh leaves. I know nothing since so startling, so utterly

unsettling, as must have been the astronomical discoveries of that time. Not only had "angelic" and "seraphic," and "irrefragable" doctors taught the ancient cosmogony, but painters and poets had made it a reality. The Earth was the centre of the Universe, the seven crystalline spheres carrying the sun and moon and five planets, the sphere of the fixed stars and the *primum mobile* surrounded it, these all, vast as were their dimensions, could be taken in by the mind's eye. Beneath was the abode of evil spirits—above, the new Jerusalem, the Throne of God, saints and angels. Men knew then where heaven was. But Copernicus and Kepler taught, and Galileo looked through the "optic glass" and he saw that the crystal spheres were broken, and felt the earth rolling under his feet. We have records of those who believed, and those who disbelieved the new truth, but of the spiritual conflicts which doubtful, timid souls went through we have none—the unlearned were not then writers. Surely when these bright visions of a material and local heaven faded away, and they found themselves on the shore of this little world in a boundless ocean of space, the earth must have appeared to many, as to Hamlet, a "sterile promontory". We think of them standing trembling, like the young sea-birds ere they first plunge into the sea—timidly they move their pinions, and scarcely venture from the shore. There seem to me unmistakable allusions to the new Kosmos in Hamlet. Shakespeare had heard the heavenly music, had seen the crystal spheres.

"Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold—
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings
Still quiring to the young eyed cherubim."

But now for Hamlet the "nutshell" universe was gone—Was it a madman's dream, that "this most excellent canopy, this brave overhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire," appeared no other thing but a congregation of vapours? "O God!" he exclaims, "I could be bounded in a nutshell, and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams."

And if we ask, why was this boundless universe first concealed and then revealed, we seem to hear an answering voice sounding down the ages, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now". The spiritual conceptions which man can now receive, would have seemed to earlier times atheism. "Such is the order of God's enlightening His Church, to deal out by degrees His beams, so as our earthly eyes may best sustain it, for the first appearance of truth to our bleared eyes is often more unsightly than error" (*Areopagitica*). When the fulness of time comes, and men are ready for the larger thought, it is given. Man in his infancy would have lost his way, had he wandered at will through the labyrinthine chambers of his Father's palace, with its many mansions; but as he grows to maturity, he is allowed to venture from the nursery, and at length his eyes are opened to look into the depths of space, and there are put into his hands, keys of wondrous power, to unlock as it were the very gates of the heavens, an infinitesimal calculus by which suns are cast into a balance, and the laws of their motion explained. He who had before talked about, now found himself living in the presence of the Infinite—all earthly and limited conceptions became impossible, and the truth, revealed only to a few choice spirits of old, was now possessed by the world.

Surely man's spiritual nature has been developed by the knowledge of the first great inspiring thoughts of the Renaissance—this revelation through astronomy of the Infinite! "Compared with the fields from which the stars fling to us their light, the Kosmos of the ancient world was but as a cabinet of brilliants, or rather a jewelled cup found in the ocean or the wilderness."¹ The new vision of order and harmony and perfect unvarying obedience to law, then revealed to man, filled him with an overwhelming sense of the power of God, of the perfection of His laws. It inspired the first great English prose work, the splendid periods of which tell of the majesty of law, and lift our souls out of the material, the phenomenal, into the region of the real, the substantial.

It may have been that only a small minority accepted these truths at first—that even Milton and Bacon doubted them, yet I think we may believe that it was not merely the discovery of a new continent, or the rediscovery of a world of ancient thought, which enlarged men's views and awakened their energies, but that the great and overpowering conceptions of a boundless universe entered into the characters even of those who doubted or denied, and opened to their imaginations, visions of wisdom and power inconceivable in earlier times. I think that this vision, which had been seen by the few, influenced the many. In our own day, but few have read and understood the teachings of Darwin and Herbert Spencer, yet the idea of an upward progress pervades all modern thought.

And so men felt as they had never felt before, as they never would have felt unless their old belief had been taken from them, that God is indeed incompre-

¹ Essays by J. Martineau.

hensible, all-wise, almighty, and to them, as to the prophet of old, came the thought, "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord? Hast thou not known that the everlasting God fainteth not, neither is weary?"

May we not trace this thought, too, in what we call temporary aberrations? We should expect that the new and large conceptions would so overpower man, that he would become insensible to other aspects of truth; and we do in fact find one section of thinkers losing faith and returning to heathenism because they could not see God.¹ Another, dazzled by the vision of His glory, His Almightyness, reduced man to a mere passive instrument, and deprived him of free will; and so to some of the followers of Calvin, God was an almighty tyrant, and virtue but a name. On the other hand, the most violent enemies of Calvin, the Jesuits, taught also that perfection was to be found rather in passive obedience than in the education and consecration of the will, so that the perfect Jesuit was to be a corpse; and the third great section of the religious world, the Mystics or Quietists, taught by words and acts that we must cease to will or to desire. Yet I think these new and enlarged conceptions helped to turn Puritans into Ironsides, because they felt they were doing battle for the right, and that God was with them, awakened in Jesuits an ardent zeal for missionary work, and animated the Mystics to endure persecution and sustain faith in the midst of a corrupt society.

And what was the second great revelation of God through science? It came about two centuries later through the teachings of Geology. Not now did men look to the heavens above, they seemed to hear a voice

¹ I do not mean to exclude other causes, as the revival of classical learning studies, the demoralisation of the clergy, etc.

near them, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet. The place where thou standest is holy ground." As Astronomy had led man into the temple of the Universe, and bidden him worship the Infinite, so did Geology unfold the scroll of time, and he bowed before the Eternal. How compact was the old system of time as presented to the religious conception! A world is called suddenly into being, there is a week of solar days, and the work of Creation is accomplished! Man's life upon the earth, as we read in religious books, was 2,000 years before Abraham, 2,000 to the Coming of Christ, 2,000 years after, and then the Millennium, the Sabbath of rest! We all know that shells on mountains were long regarded as evidence of the Deluge, and we still see for sale in country places Antediluvian fossils, whose chronology is fixed by the fact that they are marine products found on high ground. I have read a pamphlet in which it was argued that animals and plants, or things which looked like them, might have been created inside rocks, and many good people were frightened, when it was found that the days of creation were not solar days. We, who have learnt upon what insignificant data such beliefs were founded, understand with difficulty the troubles which were felt by many, when from gathered facts, geologists began to build up theories. It seemed that they could no longer hear the voice of God walking in the garden—no longer was the home of man's childhood near. They must ascend the endless river of time, only to lose themselves in the ocean.

Yet our souls have been developed by these enlarged conceptions. We take one page of the geological record, the corals. We read a few lines—ten feet of depth on the Florida coast; we find it is impossible to assign less than 70,000 years for the growth of

these ten feet. How many myriads of our little years then have corallines been at work? and how long was that book in writing, of which the period of coral life is but one page? And when we have read the whole volume, physical science leads us still further back to an anterior past, during which we see molten masses taking form and shape, and as we peer into the depth of the ages, we are enabled to feel, what we before believed, that time too is boundless, that we are

“Poised ’twixt two infinities
Endless time and boundless space”.

And who would now part with that great Rock-book which tells us of a God, “the same yesterday, to-day and for ever”; which shows us the same laws at work in the infinite past, and helps us to realise that time is a mode of finite consciousness, but to the Eternal, time is not! And if storms and tempests, darkness and doubt, seem now to sweep over the earth, we may gather hope and courage from the past, for ever has darkness been succeeded by a brighter day. May we not hope that God is only waiting to give us, too, some larger thought in the fulness of time?

Let us, then, look into the past for auguries of hope. Who were the doubters then? Not the greatest thinkers, not those who had climbed the mountain tops, for

“By each new obeisance in spirit, they climbed to God’s feet,”

but the men who, toiling after these in vain, were enveloped in the mists that clung around its flanks. Was it the leaders of thought who raised those cowardly cries when the light dawned on astronomy? No! “whilst the flocking timorous birds fluttered amazed,

these eager spirits were kindling their undazzled eyes at the full midday beam, purging and unsealing their long-abused sight at the fountain of heavenly radiance".¹ Copernicus, calm and fearless, declared that by the grace of God he would make the new teaching clearer than the sun. And Kepler's voice we hear chanting the Celestial Harmonies in the light of God's presence : *Qui lumine naturæ desiderium in nobis promoves luminis gratiæ, ut per id transferres nos in lumen gloriæ, gratias ago tibi, Creator Domine, Qui delectasti me . . . in operibus manuum tuarum exsultavi. Manifestavi gloriam operum tuorum hominibus.*²

Newton acknowledged the spirit of God not in the outer world alone, but speaking to the soul of man ; Pascal consecrated all his powers to God, and Leibnitz indited a *Theodicée*. We all know the faith of Hugh Miller, Buckland, and Adam Sedgwick, and no one now looks on astronomers and geologists as, therefore unbelievers. If we come to our own day, and seek for the "Prince of Physicists," we find in Faraday the no less faithful and devoted Christian ; and we are familiar with the names of profound thinkers, who are leading the re-action against what cannot be called a philosophy, but rather the despair of philosophy, to whom the things which are seen, speak of the "Unseen Universe".

These wider conceptions have not destroyed our faith in the spiritual, in the communion of the soul of man with the soul of all things ; rather a fuller, larger conception is ours of all that is meant by inspiration ; we think of a divine wisdom not outside of, but penetrating the human spirit, of a living power, not given only in the past, but with us to the end of the

¹ *Areopagitica*.

² *De motibus Planet. Harm., lib. v., c. ix.*

world, expounding, unfolding the divine purposes; we believe in a Divine Word, written in the records of old, both on the tables of stone, and on the fleshy tables of the heart: thus, our faith is quickened, and our understanding opened to receive all those scriptures which were given by the inspiration of God, for the "letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life".

Let us look once more into the Visible Universe, and ask, What is the New Wine which God is now pouring out for us, what is the special teaching of science to our own age? I do not mean the unproved *theories* of development, but the definite *facts* of physical science not known in the past.

We no longer dwell chiefly on the thought of a God revealed in infinite space or time; we have learned even perhaps to speak of space and time as modes of man's consciousness, and so they seem no longer objective realities in which the Ego is lost; we may even live in a sort of Ptolemean ideal Kosmos, of which not the world, but the conscious Ego is the centre!

I think that as the Infinitely Great has been revealed in the past, so the Infinitely Little has been unveiled to the present. When speaking, however, of the Infinitely Little, I do not allude to the discovery by the microscope of things which can be seen, inconceivably minute though they be; the microscope is only a kind of telescope, invented at the same time with it, and revealing to us a more abundant life, where we knew beforehand that it existed. I mean the truths of atomic science. What physical science has shown for the first time to our age, is a wondrous vision of atoms, which no eye can see, animated as it were by polar forces. We have become conscious of an all-pervading life, one yet multiform, revealing itself in Kosmic

energies, giving to each body its shape and accidents, and under the correlative forms of motion, heat, electricity, etc., binding together the whole. Near us, about us, we have found a living universe, where we had once seen only death—the hard stone, the cold iron, are in restless motion—everywhere are vibrating, trembling atoms, energy indestructible, multiform, interpenetrating the Universe. We seem to be listening once more to the music of the spheres, brought down to earth, to hear as it were the murmur of motion, as we contemplate these atoms in mystic dance.

As we gaze on and strain our mental vision, the atoms become infinitesimal, they vanish, and leave only an unclothed energy—our old conceptions of matter are gone, what we once called real and substantial has become for us phenomenal—what we used to call spiritual is now the real, the underlying, the substantial, the hypostasis; we become conscious

“Of ebb and flow and everduring power;
And central peace subsisting at the heart
Of endless agitation”.¹

And so the phenomenal becomes to us the sacrament of the substantial, of the underlying life, it speaks to us in parable of the Life in Whom we are all one, of Whose fulness we have all received, of a Life as much larger than the Humanity of Comte, as the heavens are higher than the earth; not a trembling atom anywhere in that boundless ocean of being, but its emotion is felt throughout the whole, no utterance of Divine joy, but the stars sing together. As we feel everywhere motion and life, the words come back to us with a new force—“In Him we live and move, and have our being”: we feel that the spiritual is fulfilling the

¹ Wordsworth's *Excursion*.

material, and thus our greatest thinkers in physics are forced once more to explore the boundaries of the Unseen Universe—physics merge into metaphysics, and through the teachings of physics and metaphysics, we learn to feel the nearness, the intimate union of all Creation with a living God—to realise better the spiritual teaching of Him, Who is to Christians the Divine Logos, Whom we believe to be still a Presence not merely above and around, but the *bond* of the material, the *life* of the spiritual.

Thus Creation is flooded with the light of heaven, each flower is a shrine, the Kosmos is a temple, in which dwells a Living Presence.

“ God glows above
With scarce an intervention, presses close
And palpitantly, His soul o’er ours !
We feel Him, nor by painful reason know.”¹

The Unseen Universe is no longer distant and future, but an ever-present reality, we are citizens of a heavenly commonwealth, and the human soul with its strange emotions is not a solitary being, but a living member of a mystical body ; and so the teaching of science brings home to us some truths of Christianity of which we had previously too feeble a grasp, and the voice of nature speaks to us of life through death, of the mystery of pain, of suffering for ends unknown to the finite, but known to the Infinite ; it helps us to rest in a living God, though we may not see His face and live.

Yes, there is much in the opening of human thought to give us confidence and hope. The old cosmogony is swept away, and with it the cycles and epicycles, which could never interpret the mystery of heavenly motions ; but when we stand on the central sun, all

¹ Browning’s Luria.

resolves itself into order and harmony. Surely there is a place in the Spiritual Universe near the throne of God, whence we shall see the confusions of earth resolved into beauty and joy.

We have seen the barriers of time broken down, and an eternal purpose working through the ages ; and we feel we can trust Him who is strong and patient, to whom a thousand years are as one day.

We have in still later times become conscious of an all-pervading energy filling the Universe, felt by the living and the dead, indestructible as the atoms of which science tells us ; and unless we deify matter, teaching a "fetish doctrine,"¹ or destroy the unity which science tends ever more to establish, we must believe in one almighty power working through the visible. Surely we have been Manichees in spirit ; we have not felt, as we ought, that the Kosmos is a Word of God, and so it has not been to us, as it might be, as it was to the deep thinkers of old, to Prophets and Apostles, and to the greatest poets of our century—a sacrament of the invisible.

"The arras folds that variegates
The earth, God's ante-chamber."

This consciousness breathes through all the poetry of Wordsworth :—

"And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts : a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man :
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things ".

¹ Prof. Newman.

It was felt, though less intimately, by Coleridge :—

“ Motionless torrents ! silent cataracts !
Who made you glorious as the gates of heaven
Beneath the keen full moon ? Who bade the sun
Clothe you with rainbows ? Who, with living flowers
Of loveliest blue, spread garlands at your feet ?—
God ! let the torrents, like a shout of nations
Answer ! and let the ice-plains echo, God !
God ! sing, ye meadow-streams, with gladsome voice !
Ye pine-groves, with your soft and soul-like sounds !
And they too have a voice, yon piles of snow,
And in their perilous fall shall thunder, God ! ”

Although one cannot say such a thought is the life of Tennyson's poetry, as it is of Wordsworth's, one meets here and there the very strongest utterances of this Christian doctrine.

“ Speak to Him thou, for He hears, and spirit with spirit can meet—
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet. ”

Thus we find in the scientific teaching of our own days much to lift us to higher moral and spiritual conceptions—to make us in a real sense catholics, through the sense of a Divine presence, which makes all things one—to teach us that isolation is death.

As the heavens have opened and shown us the Infinite, as in the great Rock-book we have read of the Eternal, so in the energies immanent in Matter, which control and guide the worlds, and rule the motions of the invisible atoms, we see shadowed forth the Living, the Omnipresent God.

The Connection of Literature with History.

THE connection of literature with history, of thought uttered with thought acted, the power of events to mould the character, is a subject of unfailing interest in biography, and is perhaps even more so in the biography of nations. Of them, as of individuals, it is true that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, and, in the writings which have been preserved, more perhaps than in the study of the mere acts of men, do we learn that through work and sorrow and material prosperity each nation has wrought out its own salvation, or that of others. We shall find throughout many analogies between individual and national history, and yet there are differences in the work assigned to each; as Dante has pointed out in "*De Monarchia*," the functions of the individual, the city, the state must be distinct.

Still, we may perhaps treat many of the causes of excellence as common, premising however, that too great importance should not be attached to external causes, when they are brought to bear upon a man already educated, a nation already civilised; a fever may stunt the growth of a child, which would be powerless to affect the frame of a grown man. Thus savage races melt away before the advance of civilisation, for the weaker the will, the individuality, the more is man the prey of circumstances.

First I would inquire what are the causes which tend to produce not merely individual excellence in literature, but those bright periods of which we read

from time to time in the world's history ; and seek out what are the causes which, on the contrary, tend to produce decay. Possibly we may find our inquiries not merely what Bacon would have called light-bringing, but also fruit-bearing.

Before proceeding further it may be well to define not only what is meant by literature generally, but specially what is meant by the literature of an age. This may be defined as the deliberate expression in written words of the thoughts of that age, thought crystallised into permanent form by written words. It is only one of many modes of utterance. In the physical world, for instance, force applied in various ways may cause a fluid to be agitated by waves, or boil with heat, or slowly and noiselessly build up crystalline forms of beauty and symmetry. So there seems to be in the world of thought a conservation of energy, a correlation of forces. Energy may be transformed into action, and then the great men are found amongst the fighters rather than the orators. It may be transformed into passion, and find its expression in the words and works of revolutionary periods, in rhapsody, in music.

We have next to consider, *a priori*, what causes tend to produce energy, and further, to direct that energy into literary channels. Let us then inquire what tends to bring out strength and earnestness in individuals, to lead them to use to the utmost, and to develop to high perfection, the ability that is in them. It is clear that no one produces great works without some powerful stimulus, it may be of a higher or of a lower kind. Thus, with some it is the necessity of earning money, with others it is ambition, and with others enthusiasm in a noble cause, patriotism, religious zeal, admiration of the noble things done by those who

have gone before, and that excellent emulation which cares nothing to be best, but much to be good. Still there must not be stimulus alone, for then the energy will rather tend to express itself in action : there must be leisure to reflect, to shape a monument worthy to take its place among the abiding works of the world, and such works cannot be produced by one spasmodic effort. The sculptor, the musician, the artist, must gather and garner thought ; then indeed, in the moment of enthusiasm the eager mind may shape the living form, and with the energy of genius, by a few rapid acts produce the outline of a great work. But it is, we venture to think, rarely, that even the greatest masters have left any very rapid work to perpetuate their fame. Euripides wrote ten iambics at a sitting, and Virgil five hexameters a day, and we read of Leonardo da Vinci spending three years on one portrait. Dante was not a rapid writer. Chaucer says—

“ There is no workeman
That can bothe worken well and hastilie,
This must be done at leisure parfaitlie ”.

Shakespeare seems to have produced successive editions of his plays ; Milton brooded for half a life-time over his mighty theme, and in our own day we have records of the prolonged labours of a Tennyson and a Macaulay.

So there seems, too, a brooding period for nations. If we look into the most brilliant periods, we shall generally find them not contemporaneous with, but rather succeeding, a time when men's spirits were stirred by some great motive power. The high tide follows the moon, the wave must have time to gather strength ere it can rise : so there must be first, time for the thought to rouse feeling ; there must be leisure to give to the feeling expression. Times of literary barren-

ness, on the other hand, we shall find to be those during which there is either a great expenditure of energy in other ways, or an absence of stimulus: great ease, wealth, luxury, or a time when society has (owing, perhaps, to long-continued wars or anarchy) returned to such a condition of barbarism that men are reduced to care rather for the meat which perisheth than for that which can satisfy their higher spiritual needs. Besides these larger forces we shall have also to consider the influence of great men. Prophets may arise whose "hallowed lips have been touched with fire"—who have received and are conscious of a divine commission.

We need, then, the stimulus of strong motive, and leisure for reflection; we need the bracing influences of adversity, sorrows not crushing, but fortifying; difficulties which shall make us put forth our powers; obstacles, but not insurmountable ones; and a faith which shall make us feel that life is worth living, work worth doing.

These remarks are, I think, borne out by a consideration of the periods of great literary activity, and of great literary barrenness. Let us take first the glorious period of Athenian literature, the fifth century B.C. The age of tyrants had passed away, and the vigorous little republic of Athens, fired with patriotic enthusiasm, had borne the brunt of the war in the great struggle with the Persian hosts. Æschylus, it is true, had produced his first tragedy in the same year that Sardis was burned, but he was bred in stirring times, and he was the Prometheus of the Greek poets. Sophocles was born five years before Marathon, and led the chorus which celebrated the victory at Salamis. That year gave birth to Euripides; a little later we have Thucydides, Anaxagoras and Plato, and also

Pheidias, who spoke indeed with the chisel rather than the pen, but whose genius would be developed under like circumstances. The works of Aristophanes point to a time when literary ability was declining, and men were occupied rather in criticising than in producing great works. His plays must have been addressed to a highly refined audience, subtle and keen, but scarcely vigorous and earnest—a scoffing people, who could bear to see ridicule thrown on those heroes whose memory had once been sacred; a people who would atone for their want of faith by offering Socrates as a sacrifice to their gods; a people who had been spoiled by prosperity, and were now sinking under adversity.

Or turn to the Augustan era in Rome. No great works could have been produced during that terrible period of bloodshed and civil strife included in the first century B.C. But the succeeding period, as Tacitus has so well pointed out,¹ was favourable to letters. The band of literary men who gathered round and glorified the throne of Augustus, singing of the golden age, were not produced by the influences of his court; rather in such an atmosphere would greatness decay, and the despot for whom he prepared a throne preferred, a little later, to destroy all who would not bow down before his image. The lofty poppy heads were clipped lest there should be irregularity in that well-kept garden, and so literature once more declined; even in the reigns of the good emperors it cast but a feeble light, and the third century of military despotism was one of darkness. There was some slight improvement when Constantine, having vanquished opposition, dared at length to be just; but again the darkness gathered as the northern barbarians poured down upon

¹ Life of Agricola.

the civilised world, and the disgraceful contests and mean lives of those who still claimed to be Romans prepared the way for the final fall—long threatened, long delayed.

After a while there was again a lull in the storm. A holy Roman emperor (Charlemagne) commanded the waves of barbarian conquest not to advance. For a time he was obeyed. Later, the torch of knowledge was handed on by an Alfred or an Athelstane in England. The internecine wars of the eleventh, the religious wars of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and that spirit of blind and narrow bigotry which seems to dog the footsteps of those who have no regard for, or who scorn the faith of others, prevented that free interchange of thought so necessary to all healthy culture, so that scarcely any advance was made until the close of the thirteenth century. But once more the sun was to rise. In England we see the morning star heralding the dawn. In Italy, Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch are writing for the people; but nearly another century of war passes away before the Renaissance fairly sets in. At length there is a lull: Constantinople has fallen. The exhausting wars between France and England are over, the long civil wars of the Roses are also at an end, the power of the great robber nobles is broken; France and England, Italy and the Empire enjoy occasional periods of repose; then the tide of thought, which seemed at Constance to have been rolled back, sets in once more with gathered strength, and the leaders of thought, now no longer isolated, can hear the voices of their brethren borne to them by a new power.

There are periods in the world's history in which nations seem to renew their youth; perhaps to them the method of the enchantress is applicable—wars,

pestilence, famine, dismember and consume, but from the fire of affliction they arise strong and vigorous. Such a period was the close of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century. Europe had gone to school again. The learned were at work on Greek and Hebrew; Reuchlin and Scaliger, Casaubon and Beza, Copernicus and Brahe, and Kepler, were laying the foundations of modern science; books were being multiplied in the vulgar tongue, and the less studious sought a life of adventure and discovered new lands.

The invention of printing superseded the slow process of transcription; men in distant lands were able rapidly to communicate with one another: it was a sort of intellectual telegraphy which had been discovered; the multiplication of books by print wonderfully stimulated the human mind. The leaders of thought claimed for themselves liberty, and though they refused to concede it to all, there was a considerable emancipation from the trammels of authority; but the world was not yet ripe for perfect liberty, even of thought. Those engaged in the battle could not see its bearings as we can, and they did for thought what feudalism had done for territory—they kept off barbarian invaders, they set up barriers, they erected systems, they produced articles and confessions, they conceived Utopias and drew up Institutes, and set up kings or assemblies to warn back the too adventurous. It was an era of hope and courage rather than one of experience, for the modern world had only just begun to write history. It was perhaps well that restraints were imposed on the more daring spirits; the chariot of light driven too recklessly would have set the world on fire. In every direction the field of human vision had been enlarged. Man had re-discovered or explored the world of philosophic thought; he had sailed forth

upon the unknown ocean and annexed a new world, not upon this planet only; the crystal spheres had vanished, and he could think "the nutshell in which he had once been bounded to be infinite space". He found that "there were more things in heaven and earth than had yet been dreamt of in his philosophy"; thoughts "beyond the reaches of his soul". Shakespeare searched into the mysteries of man's nature, and Bacon, like some king of fairyland, sent forth knights to destroy the brood of error, and conquer the realm of Nature.

Much intellectual work was there everywhere, but to England even foreign nations give the pre-eminence in the age of Elizabeth. A race of heroes had grown up fired with patriotism, enthusiasm, devotion, and such feelings found utterance in the historical plays of Shakespeare, in the allegories of Spenser, in the poetic deeds and words of Sidney, in the stately prose of Hooker, in the Eldorado of Raleigh, or the poetry of Bacon. The historical plays of Marlow, Shakespeare, and his contemporaries would scarcely have been produced except at a time when external dangers developed this strong feeling of patriotism; nor the later tragedies, unless the friend of Southampton had assisted at the tragedies of the closing years of Elizabeth's reign, had witnessed the fall of Mary, of Essex, of Raleigh; nor perhaps would his later works have breathed so peaceful a spirit, had not his country as well as the poet himself been resting in quiet waters after troublous times.

But whilst much freedom of utterance was allowed in England, France had been crushing out every spark of noble thought; she had slain or banished her great men, and this was a barren period for her. In the next century, by the help of a foreign ruler, she was

restored to a high place, and at its close the Grand Monarque reaped the harvest which had been sown by Richelieu. True he liked men as well as trees to grow, not according to the laws of natural grace and beauty, but according to certain patterns prescribed by himself, and so the race became unhealthy and stunted, but for a while we are dazzled by the literary splendour of the time. The glorious age for France is that of Corneille and Racine. Then lived the prose-poet Bossuet, the gentle, devoted and eloquent Fénelon, the severe and classic Bourdaloue; Molière, the Aristophanes of France, and Pascal the philosopher, the eloquent controversialist, the satirist, the devoted Christian. But again in France tyranny and oppression did their work. Meanwhile, England, like a young eagle, was renewing her strength; and Milton, with a voice loud as that of his own fallen archangel, was making his country resound with his call to battle; whilst Bunyan was telling that only by rough ways can we attain to glory; and the gentle Herbert, and the prose-poet Jeremy Taylor, were writing for the more educated classes.

The close of the seventeenth century was a period of discouragement. The zeal for truth and holiness which in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had shone in the lives of the leading opponents,—of Luther and of Loyola, of Melancthon and Borromeo, of Pascal and Fénelon, seemed to have passed away. The noble Gustavus was dead; and men whose lives showed they had no religion had been leaders in religious wars. The reformers had carried the ark of God into the battle-field, and now they were in bondage to the Philistines. In England and in France the literary decline was great, and Germany, once, and now again, the leader of European thought, can scarcely be said to have had a literature at all for

another half century, so much had civilisation been thrown back by incessant wars. Most of the courts of Europe were a scandal and a disgrace; in some there was the scoffing irreligion and the hatred of the then existing order which found expression in Voltaire, and the "natural," or rather sentimental, school of Rousseau. There could be no literature for a people such as De Tocqueville has described. Still, in England and France, good work was done in the maligned eighteenth century—work in mathematics, science, and philosophy; men were searching for the foundations of faith in the natural and the spiritual world, in ethics and sociology. Professor Dowden has shown how the eighteenth century was the parent of the nineteenth, *seculum rationalisticum* of the *seculum realisticum*. He writes: "Between these lies a period in which logical and mathematical methods of truth-discovery in the moral and social order were discredited, and the methods of the natural sciences, observation and induction, were not yet vigorously applied; a period when contemplation, serene or impassioned, played a large part in the attempt to ascertain truth, and a present Deity seemed to be manifested to the gaze of imaginative faith in the life of the world around us, in the most august and imperial of the faculties of the human soul and in the progress of the race. The few masters of that period of thought were succeeded by a generation of disciples, who modified the original teaching."

I need hardly speak of the impression made upon our own literature by the outburst of enthusiasm at the close of the eighteenth century; it is a well-worn theme. Much of the national energy was diverted for a time into military channels, and the progress of scientific discovery hindered. The political changes brought about a great alteration in the character of

our literature ; the growing power of the plebs made politicians and religionists of all parties feel the need of civilising the masses. Societies for the promotion of Christianity, and for the diffusion of useful knowledge were founded, and a literature began to grow up, intended for the people, vast in its dimensions, often light and trifling—but purer and more thoughtful than that of any previous time ; and I venture to think that, though we have much ephemeral writing, there is a great deal which will take rank among works which men “will not easily let die”.

A Vision of Many Dimensions.

AN ALLEGORY.

WE met in a pleasant country-house where I was passing my Easter vacation. Amongst the guests I was chiefly attracted by S., a young Doctor of Science, fresh from a German university, and full of the latest teachings in metaphysics. In marked contrast to him was B., an old college friend, now a London barrister. Many a ramble did we take together through the woods, or up the Welsh hills. S. and I, sitting on the peaks, discussed the deeper questions of being—of creaturely existence. When we got on these subjects, B. generally left us, and went off to look for glacial scratches and fossils. One sunny afternoon S. gave me the latest speculations of transcendental philosophy, regarding creatures of dimensions less or more than three.

For the benefit of my readers I will give his exposition. "It is conceivable," he said, "that there should be creatures who could have no conception of what we call surfaces and solids—who could move and see only in one line, and moving in a line they could know it only in detail, they would not be able to see it as a whole, for to see a line we must be out of it—of direction, surface, solid, they could have no idea; such we might call one-dimensional or linear creatures. We might conceive another order, able to see and move in a plane only; these would be able to take in at a glance the succession of points which

form a line, and thus they would get the idea of various directions. We might call these two-dimensional or superficial creatures. But though moving in a surface they would not be able to see it as a whole, they could know it only in detail, for to see a surface they must rise out of it; of solids, these would have no idea. Ourselves we may call the three-dimensional or material creatures; we can see lines, surfaces and solids, but we cannot take in solids at a glance, we know them only as bounded by surfaces.

“Is three-dimensional space a form of our limited thought? Is there a fourth dimension as inconceivable to us as a solid to a superficial, or a surface to a linear creature? To the linear creature, anything crossing his line would seem to come from nowhere, because from outside his world, and anything moving away from the line would pass beyond his sphere of consciousness—would cease for him to exist. The sphere of the two-dimensional, or ‘superficial’ existence, would include and go beyond the linear, but to creatures living in surface, things above or below would be non-existent. Again, the three-dimensional or material creature would have larger conceptions than the superficial. His sphere includes that of linear and superficial existence and goes beyond it. There are some remarkable passages in Plato regarding those whose notions are only two-dimensional, who have only ‘eyes for surfaces’. His Cave-men¹ regarded the shadows they saw as the only realities. His quarrel with the poets was that they were *superficial*—they held up a mirror to life, and were thus contrasted with the philosophers who saw the essentially true, the ideal.

¹ Republic, book vii.

Selfish pleasure he calls the shadow of pleasure, and represents it by a superficial figure,¹ the square of 3. Is there a beyond which to us is supernatural, but is, in a higher sense, natural? Are the solid forms, which are realities for us, mere negations of light—and yet are these in some sense *παράδειγματα* 'patterns of things in the Heavens,' translating for us the incomprehensible into the conceivable. Are we

Placed with our backs to bright reality,
That we may learn with young unwounded ken
The substance from its shadow?²

Are there beings who comprehend in a larger generalisation the solid forms which we think final; who know more than three co-ordinates, who are near us, and know us, because their sphere of existence includes ours, but are made known to us only when they enter the circumscribed region which is our world?"

At this moment B. joined us with some specimens he had found, and began to point out to us the height attained by the great glacier which had once filled the valley. As we walked home, he traced for us all the effects produced, the lakes formed by the scooping action of the ice. I was silent, though not uninterested; I felt myself going back and back in thought to the times when glaciers came into existence, and then to the date of planetary evolution, and then I was lost in the ocean of diffused matter, and I wandered out of it into dreamland.

At dinner I found it difficult to talk with my neighbours about the scenery, the tennis party, the excursion to a neighbouring abbey, and the journeys they were planning to the Continent and back. This talk seemed

¹ Republic, book ix. ; Jowett's Plato, vol. iii., 587.

² Coleridge.

to me so one-dimensional; and as I tried to pass to higher modes of thought, the things which we were always discussing at table—the political contests, the leadership of parties, the movement of armies on the political chess-board—seemed so two-dimensional, so superficial.

After dinner I retired to the smoking-room, and meditated. Presently S. and B. came in, but I was too weary to talk much; still, as I parted from B. for the night, I could not help saying: "Yes, you are right, science can give us no real causes, only sequences of phenomena; there must be, what Bacon called, a *prima philosophia* which deals with a region beyond—a spiritual, underlying the material".

"Nay," said B., "we will rest from this weary quest. These are mere dreams of philosophy, shaping themselves in each man's fancy; these are but the product of brain cells, the light-flash produced by chemical combinations, mere phenomena. That which you think you see, but I see not, is a mere dream, the illusion of fevered sense, of a frame disordered; time shall be, when these phantoms of man's nervous, superstitious childhood, these visions of the twilight, shall fade in the shining light of science. Question them, seek to grasp them, and they are gone like the visions of night: they vanish in the daylight. I accept that which I see; that which is not revealed to sense may be fit stuff for fairy tales."

"What," I cried, "is there no Being higher than man; shall the Unbewusst, the Unconscious, give birth to the Conscious, the greater be contained in the less! Pure Reason can never account for love, I grant, but love exists, and aspiration after the Infinite, if Reason cannot account for these, so much the worse for Reason. Is this world indeed an island without a shore, and are

there no inflowing tides from the Infinite? Is there no abyss of Being, whence come the forms of life? Never yet have you brought life out of death, nor till you do, will I believe that death is the end of life, but *mors janua vitæ.*"

And so we parted that night, and I turned to my silent chamber, and I tried to pray; but a chill as of vapours from a dank marsh hung round my spirit; the light of Heaven, was it there, as I had once thought? a glorious life, in which we all live? an "actual," giving life and true being? There came into my mind that beautiful passage of the Vedanta:—

Father—"Fetch me a fruit of the Nyagrodha tree. Break it. What do you see there?"

Son—"These seeds, almost infinitesimal."

Father—"Break one of them. What do you see there?"

Son—"Not anything, sir."

The father said: "My son, that subtle essence which you do not perceive, of that very essence, this great Nyagrodha tree exists. Believe it, my son. That which is the subtle essence, in it all that exists has its self. It is the True, It is the Self, and Thou, O Svetaketu, art It."

Was the child right, and the sage wrong?

I slept, and a strange vision of the origin of all began to seethe in my brain; an elemental ocean, in which protoplasms seemed gradually to shape themselves. I looked, and there were the old familiar forms, trilobites, which swarmed in primæval seas, but they were of a shape I had never seen: they were smaller, and they had not the same wonderful eyes set round with facets, and looking all ways; but one eye, one deeply sunk: and they were ribbed only longitudinally, so they could not turn to right or left; and

they moved forward, looking like one vast army ; yet they were not this, for there was no concert among them ; some moved fast, others slow ; none saw his fellow, but they could see only one straight line, infinitely narrow, so small was the eye, and so deep set : they reminded me of cannons, and I heard a great sound, as each seemed uttering a voice like "on—on—on". But as they moved at different rates, there began almost immediately a noise as of crashing and destruction ; none could swerve from his path for his neighbour's sake, he could move only in his own line, so the lateral streams interfered not with one another, but as soon as one ceased to keep time with his fellows in the same line there was instant destruction to both, for then irresistible force seemed to meet an irremovable obstacle, and in a few moments this black moving army was broken to pieces, and their wrecks lay on the ocean floor, blackening it, as far as eye could see. Then I knew I had seen the one-dimensional creatures, and I understood why none such had been found in the rock-beds : there was in them no fitness to survive : they were self-destructive.

I thought at first all had vanished. Nay, there were a few surviving, who had not pursued a headlong course : they were the last of the train, and had lingered ; and then I saw that some of these had eyes of different form. At first, it seemed as if they must have less sight than the others, for a horny bar covered the centre of the aperture, in which was the eye. In some, the eye was less deep set, and so became double and these could see to right and left ; and correlated to these eyes were lateral lines, which enabled such trilobites to turn to right and left ; they could not see anything above or below the plane on which they lived : they could not rise from the ocean bed, but they knew



their fellows, and they increased and multiplied, and devoured the weeds which lay at the bottom of the ocean; but the surface on which they lived was soon exhausted, and then in the struggle for life they killed and devoured each other. And I said, these are the two-dimensional creatures, and they too are not found, for they must soon have perished.

And I looked further; and emerging here and there, I saw a higher form: yes, there were developing from these the beautiful and wonderful trilobites I had seen in museums; these had eyes, no longer sunk, but placed so that they could see all ways; bodies corresponding were lobed and ringed in all directions, so that they could freely move. I knew, since the soul is prior to the body, that such bodies could only have been fashioned by souls of larger scope.¹ Here, then, was opened to these last forms the whole space of ocean; rarely did one strike another, but they seemed occupied in exploring the heights and depths, and rejoicing in free motion; they seemed to form communities, moved by common impulse; they travelled like fish in shoals, and here and there they planted colonies, and multiplied and grew.

As I continued to watch I saw larger and larger forms, until at last some were like the huge tortoise of our new museum; when, lo, a marvel greater than I had beheld: one that I was observing grew and grew, until he had filled the ocean, as far as I could see; and the ocean seemed passing away in foam, as he rose higher and higher; and I seemed lifted up from the ocean depths, together with multitudes of creatures which were floating in the ocean, and, as I looked up, I saw standing upon the tortoise a mammoth, gigantic

¹ Timæus Jowett's Plato, vol. iii., p. 268.

as he ; and upon the back of the elephant rested a globe, and the foam of the ocean rose in spray, and clung round it, and with it were thrown up many new forms of life which had been shaping themselves while I was absorbed in watching the trilobites. Many-coloured lights played over the encircling water, and covered it with rainbow hues. Then I knew this for a vision of the world as seen by Indian sages ; the world resting on its elephant and tortoise. I seemed the only living thing left outside. Then the elephant saw me, and would have gently lifted me up, and passed me within the watery veil, that I might continue to watch in the oceans of our earth the last forms of three-dimensional creatures, and many more that had been similarly evolved in other regions that I had not watched.

But I cried, leave me outside that misty veil, that I may see yet more wonders of this primæval space, let me not plunge again into that sunlight, which revealing a world, hides a universe ; which shows only appearances, never what is : are there no higher forms yet to be evolved out of this ether, this subtler element ? Let me dwell therein.

And the tortoise, as I looked down, seemed changed, transfigured. Light shone, not only from the surface, but, whilst form remained, it was one mass of light, a bright sun, as it were a molten mass of gold ; and then form was lost in the dazzling light, and I could see no more ; but I seemed to hear a voice near me, which said : " As yet, you have risen only to the three-dimensional state. You would move not only in your own sphere ; you desire to descend and search into mysteries, you aspire to ascend ; you move not heedless of others in your own course : but self is not yet lost in the highest life of light and love, you have reached the

material state : but you may not enter on the fourth-dimensional or transcendental, nor even conceive a state in which space and time are not. There is a state higher than you are able to conceive : but how can I speak in words to those whose language is three-dimensional? Material vision is of length, breadth and depth. Can you think of a vision which is hindered and turned back by nothing, which looks at all from within as well as from without, occupying thus all space? The true substances must be of the nature of light, the energy of all ; the light which the highest creatures *you* know can see from the outside only, but which the beings which you see not behold from within." Then there came to me the words I had read, but understood not : "how in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne were living creatures, full of eyes within". And I said, these see then from within, these are not limited in sight, and their movement is not movement in our sense, it is therefore described in those words we cannot understand. There appeared to the prophet, "a great cloud, and a fire enfolding itself, and out of the midst were living creatures, whose spirit was in the wheels, which went and turned not, which came and returned not, which were lifted up ; and their wings were full of eyes". These behold, then, the inner meaning of all ; these move, yet rest : all description in words of earth seems to involve contradictions, paradoxes, "they rest not day and night," and yet for them remaineth a rest, and there is no night. There may be some deeper consciousness than we can now conceive of, in which space and time are not involved, and we cease to be each his own centre, but become conscious of centres infinite : for is not everywhere the centre of Infinity? Will time one day be no longer a condition of our

thought ; time, as regards which we are still one-dimensional, which appears to us ever as a line ; will that spread into surfaces, so that we shall not need that events shall pass before us in long procession, we shall see events co-existing ?

“ All is in all, they are, and yet shall be.

“ For all is spirit, and the world is wrought,
In one live loom of myriad minded thought.”¹

Will infinite surfaces of co-existing correlated events form some transcendental reality ? Will present, past, and future form one great tense ? Shall we one day be able to utter the unutterable name—that word, which in human speech we pronounce, I AM.

For a moment I turned faint and dizzy, a dim consciousness of Nirvana was mine, but soon I heard again the voice.

“ If man’s thoughts can dimly feel after the transcendent, language cannot utter it—enter then quietly within the veil, and leave, as insoluble for man, the problems of the Infinite.”

But I cried again : “ Let me know higher Being still ”.

And the voice answered : “ Will you lose these beautiful visions of shape and form—the outward presentation of that which is ? ”

And I said : “ Yes ! Can I not lose this life that I may find an eternal one ? ”

Then it seemed as if all the visions I had seen faded out of sight, the earth and its foundations were gone, with the primæval ocean ; and yet I knew, they were. Of body, I was no longer conscious, but I was, shall I say, baptised in life, bathed within and

¹ Little Child’s Monument, Hon. Roden Noel.

without, in it I lived, moved, had my being, I was conscious of life, only in the infinite consciousness ; and as I felt this new life, those old problems were solved which had seemed insoluble : of how mind affects matter, of how one material atom can move or attract one not in seeming contact. Can I say that the Whole interpenetrated all existence, that the life of all filled each, and each was drinking in that one life, as on earth every separate existence drank in the sun's life, and so lived in the One, that there was communion of all with each ; an all-energising life, which made created existence conceivable ?

Yet I was not merely passive ; there seemed in me an energy of desire for more life and light, that I might energise those who were yet shut in by barriers of time and space—make them know that heavenly music which is life eternal—the harmony, the song of all creation, as uttered by all, felt in all ; a song which seems imperfect, unintelligible, because only some notes reach those shut in by time and space. But not even in the highest ecstasy could I present in thought, much less in words, the sense of that fulness of joy which none can feel and live ; a joy fulfilled by the vision of all things, existing in such perfect relation that there was a music not like that of the world, which includes in each cadence a discord, but a harmony which was silence, a peace which passeth understanding. Yet this peace was not passive, not merely potential, but “actual”.

Now it seemed as if my consciousness were shadowed out by those states of what we call matter, when, trembling with the might of some stronger energy, each atom is suffering internal tension ; is stretching forth to unite itself with some substance with which it is bound up in mysterious affinity.

For me the visible was not. Was this because I had entered upon a higher, more energetic life? I knew that the low vibrations of visible things can be seen by us ere they

“ Trembling pass in music out of sight,”

but then our sluggish sense can keep time no longer. Had the energising of the spiritual being attuned me as it were for only the highest notes ; so transposed the octaves of sensation, as it were, that the slow vibrations through which things of sense appear were lost, and I felt only the spiritual. I was conscious of sympathetic presences ; there was a strange inexplicable joy, like that felt when the breezes of spring have gone forth quickening all earthly things to fresh life ; on the one side I was conscious of a life all-embracing, which was the life of all things, and my life too ; and I thought, for the first time, I understood what is meant by communion with the saints, those who by spiritual energy pass the bounds of the Kosmos, and enter the Transcendent : on the other hand, I knew there was that which we call existence, *i.e.*, the finite, the phenomenal, because, in a strange sense, the phenomenal seemed within me : whereas, in my former state, it had seemed to be without me, and I felt to know what Plato had meant by Ideas : but the Ideas were mine, and not mine, for they were the manifestation in my being of divine energies. In myself, form was not, and I wondered that I could have wished to be shut in for ever by form. Could the bird desire to return to the egg ; to leave the vault of Heaven, and the ocean of light and life ! I wondered too—for I seemed ever gaining consciousness of communion with blessed spirits,—why I had wanted to see them imprisoned in spaces. Not through ear or eye did they now speak ; and yet there was inward communion—communion, contact, not in part through

eye or ear, or touch, not in some points, but all-embracing ; in earthly language, we should have said our hearts were one, through inward sympathy. But with others, with the inhabitants of earth (for I was conscious of, though I saw not, earth) the communion was still partial. The words of old mystics came to me again, who had spoken of opening a window to the Infinite ; but I was now outside the house, looking in, as it were, at the window, from which those were looking forth who had not entered into life through the gate of death. These, I felt, my being could only partially touch through thought, through dimensional presentations ; yet some there were whose being overflowed the earthly body, even while it clung to it ; who felt the infinite sympathies with the One in Whom is enfolded, out of Whom is ever evolving, in Whom is ever living, the manifold which we call existence ; who felt not only the length and breadth and depth of the love of God, moving in the sphere of the material, but saw the pleroma, fulfilling all the heights of Being, knew the love that passeth knowledge.

And in the consciousness of a life inflowing into, indwelling in, overflowing all that is, it seemed strange that I could ever have thought that I believed in death. I was so glad to be free from the burden of flesh ; rather now in my eagerness did I desire to rend the veil, which seemed to me to shut out souls from full communion with the Divine Being in whom I now lived ; some dim half-remembrance, half-vision, I seemed to have, of what men call body, but it was no longer visible to me as a dark substance ; yet between me and the yet-three-dimensional, there was only imperfect communion, not the full, deep, inward sympathy of perfect knowledge, which I felt with those no longer shut in by space and time. If I seek for a presentation, I may

say, these seemed to me to be like some beautiful bubble of rainbow hue filled with a gas, pressing from within to break the thin barriers, and to float forth into the infinite; and each aspiration after the perfect, made the outer covering thinner, and there was then a diffusion, and my being seemed to vibrate with theirs, and there was that utterance of sympathetic emotion, which on earth we should have called music. And then, too, I seemed drawn strongly as it were out of the universal, into the old space and time in which I had once lived; the time before I had died out of space. Once specially there came to me a consciousness as of one in sorrow, and I yearned to bless. Then, I felt, I knew, that virtue could go out from me, that I was in some sense a mediator of true life. I was able not to live only, but to love, to give something of the joy which I felt, and which I had only so imperfectly expressed once through speech, and eye, and touch. Yet to have and to give were words which had changed their meaning for me: I had nothing, yes, even I myself was not; only was I a minister, a mediator of that which was, which through me was ministered. From time to time a sense of deeper need moved me into closer sympathy, and then an earthly form I had known became visible. One sufferer on a sick bed I saw look up with wonder and name my name, as though I had again taken form for her; and she murmured some old words: "It is like the precious ointment," "like the dew of Hermon"; and I was filled with gladness, and a great longing possessed me to enter once more into communion with the sorrowful, to share their sorrows, that they might share my joy, and I cried: "Oh that these might know the Divine Love and Joy,—that I might minister to them Eternal Life".

And answering my desire a strange feeling came over me ; all the tides of the Infinite seemed flowing in upon my being : the sense of omnipresence was swept away, the Ego was there once more, space and surface and shape ; that personality which seemed all-pervading, and glad and energetic as light, and formless as character, was becoming circumscribed. Was this then the condition of an energy actualised ? Had my longing to give to creatures of space and time drawn me once more within its forms ? Was it thus only I was able as yet to mediate the Divine ? Could I lose the Infinite, the Eternal Sense, which is True Life ?

My desire, then, had been a prayer. "Whatsoever ye ask, ye shall receive." I was returning once more to the consciousness of earth, I was entering its atmosphere : for a moment I sought to escape, as dark visions of suffering rose around me ; but I heard the words of the Son of Man : "I lay down My life, that I may take it again". "No man hath ascended to heaven, but He that came down from heaven."

Had I then desired to reverse God's order, to enter into life, without that sojourn on earth ? Had I wished to escape the baptism of water, which must in God's order precede the baptism of the spirit, which is in some sense a death like that of the buried seed ? Must I renounce, then, the full consciousness of the eternal life, enter the darkness to accomplish God's work, lose my life, to receive it back with a deeper knowledge of the Divine ? Must the spirit feed on the forms of earth, for true personality to grow ? Must light be known through darkness, the evening and the morning be the first day ? Must the resurrection life be reached through Hades, the unseen through the seen ? Has God thus ordained for man, as for the Son of Man ?

Then I would return to earth, I would die that I might live! I turned dizzy. I was sinking, sinking through space. I woke with a start: the sunlight was streaming through my window, and shining upon a marble cross twined with lilies. It was Good Friday.

13 meter 12.21.56 c1e

PR 99.B3 C.1
Literary studies of poems, new
Stanford University Libraries



3 6105 036 605 132

PR
99
.B3

STANFORD UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
CECIL H. GREEN LIBRARY
STANFORD, CALIFORNIA 94305-6004
(415) 723-1493

All books may be recalled after 7 days

DATE DUE



